LABOUR IN MADRAS

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LABOUR IN MADRAS

By B. P. WADIA

WITH A FOREWORD BY

COL. JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD, M. P.,

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To

KALYANASUNDARAM MUDALIAR, Esq.

MADRAS.

My Dear Friend,

This is your book as much as mine. If the speeches delivered here achieved any good among our friends at Perambur it is due to your excellent translations of them. What could I have done in the Labour work in this city without you? You translated my speeches—not my words merely but their very spirit. We have rejoiced and suffered together with thousands. Your unobtrusive manner, your loyal support, your sagacious advice have been priceless. Let me request you to accept this small gift of dedication for your all too splendid services.

Ever yours,

B. P. WADIA

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FOREWORD

BY

JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD, M. P.,

There is no one in India who knows so well as does Mr. B. P. Wadia the needs of Indian labour, the legislation that has been passed into law, the legislation that is now required to help and establish labour's rights. He was the first to organise and establish a durable Trades Union. He is the first victim of the present state of Indian law which allows trades union leaders to be sued for loss caused to employers by Trades Unions action, legitimate in other lands. He therefore is well fitted to write this book.

As my friend of many years standing and as an old Trades Union colleague at Labour party Conferences, I am delighted to write this Foreword, and to be witness to the selfless work done for years by a man unjustly maligned both by rivals and by enemies.

There are many who are now helping Indian Labour to its place in the sun, great orators such as Lajpat Rai, great thinkers such as Mahatma Gandhi, but none has so resolutely given all his strength to the one cause—— the organisation and emancipation of Labour.

If everything should be subordinated toTrades Union work, I think Wadia is right in keeping clea

of political parties. In England we have Conservative Trades Unionists; here in India is a large body of "Untouchable" Trades Unionists, who resent bitterly their social subordination under caste rule. All Trades Unionists must be kept together if they are to defeat capital; Nationalists who resent English domination and untouchables who resent Brahmin domination, must be kept together. For such reasons, Labour was of no party in England before it became its own party. For exactly the same reasons, Labour here too must eschew party politics till it can speak for itself.

I do not believe that Labour has been or is being "used" by politicians as some suppose. The thinking men who lead must have politics of their own, but it would be wise to keep nationalism and anti-Brahminism in the background, when they are doing their work for labour. Do not introduce politics into the Union.

It is inevitable that in the beginning Trades Unions must be organised and conducted by educated men from outside the Trade. The training of a General Secretary from a working hand is a long business. Just as in England the trained Unionists of the National Union of Railwaymen started, organised and trained the Agricultural Labours Unions, so in India the lawyers must be expected to organise the workers. It is a libel to pretend that they profit from the work and I wish

more would act as unselfishly. But Wadia is not even a lawyer. About such a man there is no thought or hope or prospect of gain. He is typical of India's spirit of self-sacrifice.

As soon as possible, and in the interests of the Unions, men who have worked at the Trade should be trained to lead the Unions. They know the trade and difficulties of jargon as no lawyer can. But when the employers ask for only such Unions as are led by workers, they are now really asking for tame incompetent Unions, and they drag in the terms "lawyer and politics" to create prejudice. Soon men of the trade will be leaders; but then they must be whole-time officials paid by the Union, and not the masters' servants liable to victimisation and, worse still, to corruption by promotion.

But the Trades Unions must use politics, even while they avoid party politics. The Unions are so weak and helpless at present—so prescribed by law—that they have to turn to Government. While they are voteless they can only turn as suppliants. They can only show that the politicians who help them, they will help by their voices now, by their votes in future.

At once a law is wanted legalising Trades Unions as in England. Then Factory Acts are wanted :—Employers' Liability Acts ; Minimum Wage Laws. Even now by using their friends on

the Councils they can, by Question and Resolution, press forward these laws. Leaders who say that Non-Co-operation bars out the use of any present Councillor, do not understand the urgency of Labour's need, or its ability to force its claim, even without the vote. In this book Wadia has indicated the nature of the trouble and the way out. I beg Labour Leaders generally not to suspend the use of a weapon which may help to put matters right for India's starving poor.

PREFACE

History in the making, however romantic, does not strike its makers as either history or romance. Like the gentleman who spoke prose without knowing it, almost all makers of history are unaware of the fact that they are such worthies. In rare instances when Nature is moving forward, as is sometimes her wont, in leaps, events of yesterday stand glaringly revealed to-day already as facts of history.

One such instance is provided by the Labour Movement in Madras. When it was started in the early part of 1918, no one dreamed of the effect it would have on its environment generally; it was hoped that besides bettering the lot of the poor drudges and slaves of the economic system it might slowly tend to the creation of class consciousness among the Indian workers. In very unexpected ways, in quarters the least suspected, the labour work in Madras produced effects. Who could have anticipated the aid it rendered to the cause of Indian Home Rule in Great Britain, especially with the British Labour Party in the summer of 1919? Very few could have dreamed of the readiness and capacity of the Indian workers to unite and organise, to educate themselves in the matter of their own rights and prerogatives and to

agitate for gaining them. Who among us, who went to them, had any inkling of the culture inherent in the labourers, who had any idea of their political instinct and practical sagacity?

The Movement, I believe, has come to stay. It cannot be killed, nor can its swift growth be checked for any length of time. A tiny seed sown at Perambur has sprouted and the winds of the world and national circumstances have swept some of its early seeds to other places.

How well I remember the forenoon when two men, unknown to me, whom I had never seen before, came and told me something about the "suffering labourers". They referred to the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, of which I had vaguely heard, but of which I knew less than little. They referred to "a few minutes for food," "swallowing a few morsels," "running lest they be shut out". It was at *New India* office, where I was then working under my beloved and respected Chief, Mrs. Besant. She was not in office that day, and I was loath to leave it in her absence even for a couple of hours. But my Theosophical spirit got the better of my political duties. I immediately ordered my car, took the two strangers, and went to Perambur and watched outside the Mills where I saw the poor labourers at their noon-day meal. It was quick work. They came, they gobbled, they returned.

That was how it began. On the following Saturday we had a meeting, followed by another, and yet another——but the story will be found in the book. I agreed to the publication of my speeches and the narrative of the struggle—a struggle which is not over, nor is it likely to be for some time yet. We have not included the history of the work and progress of the first Trade Union in India since my return from abroad in August 1920. The wonderful unity and solidarity displayed by the textile workers of this city, the resort to Passive Resistance, the unjust lock-out of 5500 men from the Buckingham Mills, the effort on the part of the employers to break the Madras Labour Union as it is constituted now, the lawsuit against myself and nine other leaders for malicious conspiracy and alienating the affection of the work people, the order of injunction stopping our mouths, and destroying our liberty of speech and action—all that is well known to the Indian public. The strike is still on ; the lock-out is not over on the 88th day as I write ; the whole story must be told elsewhere on some future occasion.

This volume gives the story of the early beginnings of the Labour Movement in India and some immediate resultant factors. In this preface, however, I should like to indulge in the expression of a few thoughts as to its future and as to the methods of advance.

The educated classes in India have so far failed to realise the great value of the Labour Movement as a factor in the general political advancement of the country. Without the masses there can be no true Democracy. For that reason, on the 1st June, 1918, addressing an open Letter to the Home Rulers, I said :

"We want to bring the masses into line with the educated classes. Much lecturing work has been done already and what seems now necessary is to combine them in all sorts of ways. Agricultural Societies, Trade and Labour Unions, Ryot Combines, Craft Guilds—these should be started. Let common interests in each taluq and village combine to remedy the evils from which they are suffering. The masses do possess political outlook ; they have lost the art of making themselves heard, and our task should be to persuade them into speech and action."

It is very necessary to recognize the Labour Movement as an integral part of the National Movement. The latter will not succeed in the right direction of democracy if Indian working classes are not enabled to organize their own forces and come into their own. Unless this is done for all classes of labourers—peasants, plantation coolies, factory "hands" and miners—even the Montagu Reforms will only succeed in transferring the power of bureaucracy from foreign to native

hands; that is not Democracy.

There is an additional reason why in the coming months, the educated classes should interest themselves in Labour problems. Because of the agitation carried on and the work done during the last three years, here, in Great Britain and at Washington, labour legislation is bound to come before our legislatures. The law-suit instituted by Messrs. Binny & Co. against me and nine others, will also force the pace of legislation for recognition of Trade Unions. If the educated classes lose the opportunity of evincing a genuine interest on behalf of labour, it will confirm the doubt Indian labour now entertains about the *bona fides* of those classes and their demand for political emancipation. Labour problems must be regarded as part of the general National problems and the interests of labour must be safeguarded against the inroads by Capital, both Indian and foreign. If at the very outset this is not done, we shall open an era of class struggle between Labour and Capital; and who wants that in India?

To this end certain principles have to be borne in mind. First, the Indian labourer's right to citizenship must be fully recognized. Legislation must cease to regard him as a "hand", in letter and spirit. Citizenship implies a condition of freedom and the labourers are not far removed from a state of slavery. Wage-slavery is only one remove from

chattel slavery and has inherent in it aspects which are worse than those of chattel slavery. Citizenship in a civilized state carries with it a decency of life, a contentment of heart, and a cultivation of intellect. These our labourers do not evince to-day in their wretched existences. Their scandalous wages, their semi-nakedness, their ghastly hovels, their awful surroundings are of a nature of which any State ought to be thoroughly ashamed.

In the coming legislation, therefore, the fact to be remembered is that labourers are the prime consideration. In creating machinery we must bear in mind that it is put together to relieve the tension of the labourer's life, and not to facilitate the hoarding of profits at the expense of human suffering. Let it not crush men, women and young persons in the name of growing industries of the country. The legislation must not be undertaken from the employer's point of view; nor must we be swayed by the dubious talk of growing industries. What good is it to a State to gain wealth out of misery and lose the soul of happiness which a contented citizenship yields? Are we going to be benefited by the lesson afforded by the utter failure of the economic and industrial system of the age which is now fast closing? Let me repeat, therefore, to our educated legislators: Do not mistake men for machines and remember you are legislating for human beings.

Next in the solution of general problems—and they are many and varied—it is absolutely necessary to recognise the fact that the old system has broken down. In most advanced countries it is evident that the solution of labour problems by old and time-worn methods is unfruitful. It is no more a question of increase of wages and decrease of hours; it is no more a question of the utility of the weapon of strikes and lock-outs. It is a new orientation — the abolition of every vestige of slavery, of any kind whatever, from the body politic of the system as a whole, which tarnishes the life of labour; the introduction of proper and adequate safe-guards for the control of production and of produce, economically and organically; the full but also the only legitimate recognition of Capital by a deprivation of its power to exploit Labour and to accumulate profits; the full measure of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship to be secured for labouring classes as for others; the recognition of the factor of growing importance in reference to the internationalism of Labour.

These are some of the points to be studied by our publicists. Let us not deceive ourselves with exploded theories of profit-sharing and the like; let our legislators endeavour to lose their Indian provincialism and look abroad at what is happening—in Italy with the metal-workers, in Great

Britain with the builders in their new guild, in Georgia with its new socialist state, in Russia as described by Mr, H. N. Brailsford. In the midst of crashing systems is slowly but surely emerging a new order of things economic, in which Labour will wield a new power, and its method of collective bargaining will not be by the old use of the strike-weapon. Hear the Labourer chant his *mantram* the world over: he sings it as his ploughshare turns the sod, he sings it as the clatter of machinery makes him deaf, he sings it in the dark dungeon of the mine, he sings it as he earns his starvation wages, he sings it at home and abroad:—

We are the hewers and delvers who toil for another's gain,—
The common clods and the rabble, stunted of brow and brain.
What do we want, the gleaners, of the harvest we have reaped ?
What do we want, the neuters, of the honey we have heaped ?
We want the drones to be driven away from our golden hoard ;
We want to share in the harvest ; we want to sit at the board ;
We want what sword or suffrage has never yet won for man,—
The fruits of his toil God promised when the curse of toil began.

B. P. W.

LABOUR IN MADRAS

FIRST MEETING OF TEXTILE WORKERS

On April 13th, 1918, the first meeting of the Textile Workers of the three mills in Chulai took place under the auspices of Sri Venkatesa Gunamrita Varshani Sabha and was held in Ramanujammal's bungalow garden, Perambur Barracks Road, when the following speech was delivered by Mr. B. P. Wadia as Chairman of the meeting.

A few days ago I heard in *New India* Office that you, who have been working in the various mills here, are in need of some advice regarding certain matters of difficulty which you have been feeling. This afternoon, I am not competent enough to speak of those difficulties, because I have not studied your problems. Presently I hope to know more about you. I would advise some of you to come and see me and speak to me as to the nature of the various difficulties which are yours, and then when I have seen for myself and am convinced that you have grievances, I may be able to help you and show you the way whereby those difficulties could be removed. If there are difficulties in the way which need to be removed, it is yourselves who could remove them and no outsider like myself can do anything more than show you the way and teach you how to remove them.

We are Brothers

Now the first thing I want you to grasp is that all of us are brothers. There are many among you who think that we people are something big, something special, something that you are not. I want you to give up that idea. There is no difference between you and us. When the Great War of Kurukshethra took place on the battle-field Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna and said that there is nothing in the whole universe that is bereft of Him. All human beings, men and women, are divine. There is God within each one of you and that God is your only helper, the only person who will bless you, instruct you, inspire you, show the way out of darkness unto light. You are all Gods; you are all divine. If other people are learned to-day and if you are not so learned, then you have to make an effort. You have all of you a mind just as the learned have. That gift of mind—manas—comes to you from Godhead. The use of that mind will enable you to realize that you alone can solve your difficulties, your troubles and your trials and that you can help not only yourselves but other people. Each one of you can help every other brother of yours inside or outside the factory. I am here not only to help you in the way that I can help you, but I am here also to receive help from you. I want to understand your conditions, the nature of your mind, what you are thinking about, what you are feeling about yourselves and the great work that is going on in this country of ours.

Home Rule

We all talk of Swaraj, but before that comes, I want to know what you are going to do with the

powers which you will have. We are fighting a big fight, not for ourselves but for you also. If you are suffering, you are suffering under a certain machinery of administration. For the existence and continuance of that machinery we are partly responsible. It is we who have allowed them to go on in the way in which they have been going on and under which many difficulties have arisen.

Let us Co-operate.

In this God's great universe there are no works which are simple. All tasks and works are beset with difficulties. If you want beneficent conditions, suitable conditions for your life and labour, we must face those difficulties and remove them, and there are possibilities of removing them. We shall be able to remove them on one condition alone. I cannot remove them, and you alone cannot remove them, but we who are not labourers and you who are labourers, we two combined, can remove the difficulties that are in our way. What is your position? What are your hopes regarding yourselves? Do you think that you will remain where you are and will continue to be in a condition of poverty and half-starvation which is your lot now? Do you wish to come out of that condition of life? I want you to believe that there is a great future before you. You must have an attitude of hopefulness and cheerfulness. A few years ago the condition of labourers in Great Britain and in all the great countries of Europe was the same as yours. Little children, women and men, were suffering in the mills there in a way in which you do not yet suffer. But by combining and by believing in their own power, by the strength and righteousness of their

cause, inch by inch and step by step they fought against those conditions and are in a better position to-day. Labourers in England to-day have great power. If the labourers say that a certain thing ought to be done, the ministers pay attention to it. You can do the same thing here. You should take counsel with those who love you.

YOUR TRUE FRIENDS

In the great sweep of things which is taking place, there are people arising who begin to understand the needs of the poor, who are sympathizing with the poor, not from a distance but feeling that they are one with you, they want to be, in the real sense of the term, your brothers. I belong to that school. I believe honestly that you have got something to teach me, that I have got something to learn from you but you must strive to use your intelligence and discrimination and find out who are your friends and who are not. When the great Devas want to test human faith, human power, human endurance, human sympathy and love, they send many kinds of messengers to see in how far the devotee is true, firm and enduring. The great Devas of India to-day send you their messengers in one shape or another, and by your discrimination you will have to judge your true friends, and take counsel from those only whom you believe to be truly your honest friends. A friend who is true in every sense of the term will show you that he is willing to sacrifice and suffer for the cause which is yours. I am speaking to you to-day; somebody else will come and speak to-morrow, but the question is who is going to sacrifice for and sympathize with all your difficulties so that you

know on whom to rely, where to go in times of distress and difficulty.

HOPE

Remember, therefore, that there is a brotherhood of souls and not only a brotherhood of bodies. I want you to strengthen that tie of brotherhood so that we may be able to understand each other. Do not be dejected, and do not think that you are going to be in this servile condition for ever. We are out here to see that better conditions and states of life come to you. I am making inquiries and I am studying your problems. Before I attack the mill-owners, I want to see where they are wrong and I want to ask them to mend matters and improve the conditions of life of their poor workmen; and if proper arguments are put forward before the mill-owners, I think we shall succeed. We want to speak to them and tell them that they are dealing with human beings and not with animals, and that if they are going to treat you as human beings and sympathetically hear us and remove such difficulties as are removable, now and here, we will work in a spirit of friendliness and co-operation. Whatever happens, whether we get applause or blame, whether failure comes to us or victory, we will go on and it will depend upon your power of endurance and mine. We shall be able to stand anything provided you show us the way and help us out of the difficulties. Remember that I am not here to better my own condition but to see that justice comes to you in the treatment given to you. To me there is no failure. I am absolutely sure of success, and if by chance I die before success comes, there is the promise of Shri Krishna that those who die in righteous work come back to carry on

the battle till victory is gained. From that point of view, we know of no defeat.

Your Rights

In this beautiful world of God, every human being has a right to have sufficient to eat, sufficient knowledge to enjoy the beauties of Ishwara, and if the conditions of society, if the conditions of trade and commerce make that thing impossible, then those people who believe in religion, as I do, those who believe in the act of Providence and blessing of God, it is their duty to remove these faults. If you want to remove your difficulties, you alone can remove them and we are willing to help you, but you must enable us to understand your difficulties and problems. Trust us with friendship as we trust you, and hand-in-hand we shall march onwards, and take our rightful place when Swaraj comes to this country, and gain for ourselves what labourers in other countries have gained for themselves, *viz.*, prosperity, victory and the right of peaceful citizenship.

SECOND MEETING

The second meeting of the Textile Workers was held on April 20th, 1918, under the auspices of Shri Venkatesa Gunamrita Varshani Sabha in the compound of Ramanujammal's bungalow, near Barracks Road when Mr. Wadia made the following speech :—

Since we met last Saturday it was arranged that you should have another meeting here at which I should bring one of our best Tamil speakers, Mr. K. Balasubramania Aiyar. During the last week a very important event happened as far as people who belong to your class

are concerned, namely, the poorer classes. You are aware that a great fight on the lines of Passive Resistance is going on in Guzerat in the district of Kaira where leader Mahatma Gandhi is trying to get some justice for the poor raiyats. The crop in the Kaira District this year is poor, and the inquiry made by Mahatma Gandhi corroborates the story of the raiyats that the crop is really poor. In spite of that situation, the Government have asked through their Commissioners. and Collectors for the usual taxation. Under the guidance of Mr. Gandhi our friends the agriculturists have refused to pay the taxation and have taken a vow to that effect. The Commissioner of the District gathered together all the agriculturists and told them to break their vow, but fortunately our agriculturists were religious enough and gentlemanly enough to tell the Collector that the vow that they had taken would not be broken and that if necessary they were ready to go to gaol. (Cheers). That is a great triumph for us and a great object lesson for all of you. If any difficulty arises for us in the future in the course of our work for your moral, religious, social and political emancipation, if any time comes where it will be necessary for you to take a vow of some kind or another, remember this great and noble example of the agriculturists of Kaira who refused to be prejudiced, coerced, threatened, or coaxed by the Collector, who is, after all, a high official of Government. That is a lesson which has its value for us, and I hope that Mr. Balasubramania Aiyar will refer to it at length and give you good advice which will help us to come together and learn from each other very important lessons for the

benefit of our common Motherland. I was saying to you last Saturday that you poor people could teach us something, and we find that poor agriculturists and peasants of Kaira have taught us, educated people, a lesson against the coaxings of an enlightened Christian Collector. The raiyats have refused to break their vow, and it is a lesson which many educated Indians of to-day will take to heart with benefit to themselves and their countrymen. That is one step greatly gained by us all, because our friends in Kaira have fought and won a moral victory, and that victory is ours also. I will ask your permission to allow me as Chairman of this meeting to send a message of hope and confidence to our brothers of Kaira led by our great leader Mahatma Gandhi. (Cheers).

THIRD MEETING

Formation of a Labour Union

On Saturday, April 27th, 1918, the third meeting of the Textile Workers was held under the auspices of Shri Gunamrita Varshani Sabha at Perambur. An intimation had been given that a scheme for the formation of a Madras Labour Union was to be put forward before the meeting. There was a very large attendance. Mr. Wadia from the chair spoke as follows :—

This is the third Saturday when we have gathered here, and after studying a little of your problems I have come to the conclusion that the time has come for us to form some sort of an organization, and I propose that we should form a little association to be called the Madras Labour Union. (Cheers). What is going to be done in that Union we may leave to the future so that

we may speak by our work and not only by our words. We shall gradually, step by step, consider what programme shall be adopted by the new association. The first great work will be the educative work which will benefit not only the members of the Union but also all the labourers in Madras. The first batch of members will have to decide what rules and regulations they want for themselves, what is the subscription they propose to give every month for carrying on the work regularly, strenuously and steadily, and what is the kind of activity that they would require the Union to undertake. We have at the present moment two things to offer to you which cost you not a single pie. First we have a good room, though small, at our disposal and a Secretary who is willing to do our work. (Cheers) I know that one small room and one Secretary will not do, because the work is heavy and arduous but we want to proceed slowly but surely, and I would ask those who are willing to join the new Association to come to us after the conclusion of this meeting to think about the problem and to join the Union. Mr. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar will explain to you in Tamil what is the necessity for such an association, but I will say this : that through that association we hope to improve the moral and social condition of not only the members who join the Union, but also of all the labourers of Madras. Our Saturday meetings will be continued, and many Tamil-speaking friends have agreed to come here Saturday after Saturday and speak to you, so that you will get a variety of Madras leaders who will explain to you the various political, social and economic problems which touch you intimately. Then there will be for the members, who

join this Union, classes where certain other things will be explained to them, things which will be of use and benefit to them, knowledge which will be of such utility to them that they may use that knowledge for the benefit of their fellowmen. We do not want the members only to listen to us and go home, but we want them to feel with us, to study with us, to think with us and to help us in the service of our brothers. We are a few people who are not labourers ourselves. We want labourers themselves to take interest and show us what are the ways and means which we can adopt to further the progress and happiness of our brothers. They know where the shoe pinches them, they know what are the troubles and difficulties which require to be removed. We can hold consultations and give such knowledge as is at our disposal but we want the co-operation, the friendliness and the brotherly attitude on the part of labourers towards us and towards those who are not going to be members of this Union. It is quite likely and natural that many thousands of people will not join us immediately but that does not matter : a hundred will do, fifty will do, twenty-five will do, or even ten will do. Ten men, good and true, courageous and fearless, bent upon doing service to the Motherland, will be able to do wonders. Number does not count, quantity does not matter ; it is quality that matters, and if only ten or fifteen men will come to us and try to show us the difficulties so that we may remedy them, our work will be well begun. I have an idea that those who join the Union should pay one anna a month. I do not know whether it is too much for labourers. (Cries of No, No.) We shall be able

to come and work for you and for all of us. Do not be afraid. I assure you that our work will be of a nature that neither the Government nor the mill-owners, mill managers or maistries will give us trouble. We are going to be peaceful, honest, straightforward, truthful workers for our own betterment. We want our own conditions improved, and if in that work you find obstacles, we will have to meet them, and constitutionally and peacefully remove them. Later on, when we have established ourselves, we shall be able to take the next step and get into a bigger building and bring up some other programme. We shall be doing nothing new. Such Labour Unions exist everywhere in the world. We have ample experience as to how these labour organizations are working and what benefit has accrued to the labourers joining them, and carrying on their work constitutionally. The betterment of your condition lies in your own hands. The Government will not or cannot help you. Your leaders will not or cannot help you, unless you yourselves have self-respect and look upon yourselves as human beings deserving respect and deserving a hearing, so that when you utter a word that word is respectfully listened to and an answer respectfully given to you. At present you cannot let your voice be heard by the Government or by the mill managers and authorities. You must be in a position, by the help and through the instrumentality of this Union, to have your voice respectfully heard. That is what Labour Unions everywhere have done for their members. You must bring your troubles and difficulties to the notice of the Union. I have got three or four

complaints and I am going to write letters and ask the people who are responsible for the difficulties to remove them, to see what answers they give us and then proceed. I am absolutely confident that we shall gain victory bit by bit, step by step, so that all of us may have contentment of mind and happiness in home. We are going to tell every one through the Union the difficulties we encounter in our homes, in the betterment of our conduct, of our disposition, of our character. Before we attack the Government or the mill-owners and managers we must see that the leaders of Madras who have neglected the labour of Madras do not continue in their negligence. That is the first thing we will have to do. I say this openly because I wish that our leaders should listen to the constitutional voice that is raising itself, namely, in the Labour Union of Madras. When we have done that we shall be able to find for ourselves what are the other steps. As many as possible should join the Association and decide with your own conscience and intelligence what you are going to do.

SIXTH MEETING

On May 18th a meeting of the Madras Labour Union was held when Mr. Wadia made the following speech:—

It gives me great pleasure to be in your midst once again after an absence of two Saturdays. It was unavoidable that I should be away from you, because I had to attend a meeting at Bombay and another at Conjeevaram. During my absence it seems the *Madras Mail* has come out with a little attack on us but I do not think it is necessary for us to give any reply. It is said there that we who believe in our political work and

propaganda have come here to get hold of you for our own purposes. That is a lie which will stand exposed in due course of time when the real nature of our work is known. Another thing: on my arrival I found was this—a number of letters have come to me mentioning of the great rise in price of food-stuffs and of clothing material. I have been thinking of it and ycu may have heard that two or three letters have already been translated and published in *New India* without giving out the names of the writers, and to-day we have written on the subject of the rise in prices. I have been conferring with some of my friends and we have come to the conclusion that it will be necessary for us to open stores from which the members of our Union will receive food-stuffs at as low prices as it is possible for us to fix. It is said in the letter—and I think it is true—that, for instance, rice is at the present moment given to you at four measures per rupee and fear is expressed that it will presently come down to three measures per rupee. Making inquiries I find it possible for us who do not want to make profit, to supply you five measures of rice per rupee and similarly in the case of chillies and salt we think we shall be able to help our members in a substantial way. Therefore we propose to open stores from which food-stuffs, especially rice, chillies and salt, will be supplied at as cheap rates as possible to our members.

On this point we ask your opinion as to which day of the week you would have these things brought to some place, and on what particular day of the week would you buy them. I understand the second Saturday of every month you get your wages. Now I think it

will be possibly easier for you to get your food-stuffs bought from the stores once a week on the day which will suit your convenience, at prices that we can offer you. Secondly I want you to realize that as we are not making any profit on these things and as we will have to do it with what little help we can raise from among our friends, articles will be sold for cash at present as it is not possible for us to give credit to our customers. So that our members will have to bring money on the spot and buy things on the favourable terms offered. Thirdly, I would ask you to write to me what are the difficulties which are in your way regarding clothing material. What is the kind of help that you, especially those who are the members of the Union, would like to have from us. I do not want to shut out those who are not members of the Union but at the present time our organization is young, our resources are limited and our first duty is towards those who have joined the Labour Union. Therefore I ask those of you who have not yet joined the Union to join it if you want some little help we will be able to render to you during the next week.

OUTSIDERS

The next point you will realizeis that there is a great amount of talk going on among people who do not understand our work. It is said that some of us have come here to use you as our tools and are directing your activities for our benefit and not for your good. I would like you therefore to realize more and more the nature of our activities for the benefit of the Labour Union, and to publicly and openly support it and show what you can do for yourselves. As I had said to you before, it is very

difficult for those who are not labourers to understand the difficulties of the labourers. Therefore I am hoping presently to form a little Committee in which half a dozen or even a greater number of your own men, chosen by yourselves, should come to work with us and show the difficulties and suggest what kind of remedies you will apply to your problems.

For that reason I once more appeal to you to get rid of the idea that you are a kind of low people with whom we will not associate. I repeat once again we all want to work as friends in a brotherly spirit so that each one of us understands the difficulties of the other and tries to help the other in his work. We are anxious to help you, but you must show us the way in which you want our help. Therefore I would ask you to cultivate in yourselves the habit of self-respect and self-reliance. I do not want you to accept what certain people have put as their valuation of you : that you are low, illiterate, ignorant, uneducated and therefore inferior to others who are educated, literate and learned. Now we do not want to make this difference at all. We want you to realize the fundamental spiritual brotherhood of mankind. We want you to recognize that you have something in yourselves which we do not possess, and similarly we have something perhaps which you do not possess. And therefore in mutual trust and friendship we want to work. Therefore cultivate every day of your life that habit of self-respect, and get for yourselves a place to stand on and a voice which will be heard. Remember that you are human beings, that you have mind, heart and body ; that you have a duty towards yourselves. I want you to realize those duties and work up to them. Do not always

depend upon other people but try to take the next step and depend upon yourselves, and work with those who recognize your equality, your partnership in humanity and leave aside those who say that they are superior to you, that they are your masters, leaders and teachers whom you should follow, without the spirit of co-operation or friendliness on their part

The Dignity of Labour

We want to go together in a friendly spirit, arm-in-arm like comrades and brothers, and it is necessary that you should develop the quality of self-respect, and realize that as human beings you refuse to tolerate insults which you, at the present moment, receive from Indians and Europeans alike. That must go, and that is one of the fundamental things that our Union must do for us. You need not be ashamed to be labourers. All of us are labourers. None in the world will be able to earn his bread without activity and labour. The great Ishwara is a Labourer. It was said in the *Bhagavad Gita* that if He did not act the three worlds would go to ruin. I am a labourer as you are, and I do not see why you should be ashamed of your labour if I am not ashamed of mine. I am proud of the work I am doing and I want you to be proud of your work. Now it is said that yours is lowly work. I do not think that many of us will be able to do the work you are doing, just as many of you will not be able to do the work we are doing. God has created these different classes of humanity, these different classes of labourers and they are all of equal value to civilization, progress and advancement of mankind. You are as necessary and important to Ishwara as we who are

supposed to belong to higher classes. Ishwara's work cannot go on without your work. He needs you as channels for the great work he is doing in the world, and on that score I would like you to develop the uttermost self-respect so that it is not possible for anyone, European or Indian, Brahmana or Non-Brahmana, to say a rude word to you, to insult you. Teach them that you are independent human beings who will not tolerate insults, hardships, moral or material; that you will not put up with any injustice or unfairness whatsoever. This is the work you must do.

SELF-RESPECT

I do not want you to think, that you are low people, good-for-nothing people, or poor people. You are not low, you are not poor in all directions, you are not absolutely useless in the world. You are of great value to this country as members of the labouring community to further the progress of the Motherland. The very first thing you should develop is the quality of self-respect. See that you do not get insults anywhere. If any one of you, the members of the Union, gets insulted by anyone who calls himself a superior person, you get the insult not only for yourself, but for the Union of which you are a member. Now as members of the Labour Union it is your duty to see that the good name of the Union is always to the forefront. Develop your self-respect, put forward your difficulties like men, courageously, boldly without fear or favour. Leave behind the quality of fear, be courageous, and fearless. Remember that is the one quality which will bring you happiness and emancipation from the kind of slavish life which you are leading at the present moment. That is

what I want you to do. It would not be difficult for me, with the help of rich friends in Madras, to give for instance food quite free for one month or two or three months. But that is not the kind of help you should expect from us. I would rather that you know how to earn your own bread and be independent yourselves so that you may claim the privilege of citizenship in the coming future. That is the main point I am keeping in my mind continuously as I think of the Labour movement : I do not want you to depend upon anyone, neither upon Government, nor upon those who employ you, nor upon mills and factories, nor upon Brahmanas or Non-Brahmanas. I want you to be dependent upon yourselves. That is the first principle I would like you to understand. When you are self-respecting and independent then only you will understand your own value, your worth to yourselves, to your mills and to your factories where you go, to the city to which you belong and to the country of which you are citizens. That is the idea I would like to leave with you to-day. Develop self-reliance, independence of character and in no circumstances tolerate any insult whatsoever. Remember that you are human beings and that therefore it is your right to get respect from other human beings, however high they may be, however educated, popular or powerful.

SEVENTH MEETING

The seventh meeting of the Labour Union was held on May 25th, 1918, Mr. B. P. Wadia presiding. He made the following speech :—

The Struggle of Kaira

My brothers, you have already heard two speeches

from two new comers at this our Saturday meeting. I do not think therefore it is necessary for me to speak to you at any great length. But during the week there have occurred cases connected with the people who were undergoing great suffering at Kaira and it is necessary for me to draw your attention to that fact. I have told you before how in company of our great leader Mahatma Gandhi the poor raiyat people of Kaira have been suffering, facing the hardhships which the officials of the Government have put on them. A very pathetic and at the same time a very glorious sight is to be seen by all those who are reading the newspapers day after day in respect of the news that comes to us from Kaira. You will find a list given of the names of the people who have been deprived of their cattle, of their vessels, of their clothes ; and all these people stand patiently in a spirit of self-sacrific putting up with all these sufferings.They have learnt that through suffering, by sticking to what they seem to think and understand to be right and correct they will presently get happiness, contentment of mind and peace of heart. That lesson ought to be taken to heart by all of us who are beset with our own difficulties and individual hardships. The example given by those working under MahatmaGandhi is one that we all have to copy in time of trial, distress and necessity—an example not of retaliation of evil with evil but of retaliation of every thing that is evil with good, of repression, and tyranny with self-sacrifice and suffering, of hatred with love.That is the great lesson that the poor people of Kaira are giving to all in India, to the rich and the poor, to the educated and the illiterate. What has never happened before in this country is happening now. Some few years ago

when there were difficulties in Bengal they were met in another way. Repression and hatred were met by anarchism. We see a glorious struggle to-day where our countrymen and brethren are meeting hatred and enmity in the spirit of love and sacrifice and tolerance. The outcome will be one of immense gain and that is the lesson I would like you to take to heart. Remember that as our Shastras have taught, enmity, hatred, repression, oppression, despotism, can only be wiped out when all these evils are met in a spirit of self-sacrifice, self-surrender, self-abnegation, in an utterly cheerful and joyous attitude. That is the lesson we must all remember. Our business is to point out what are our difficulties, to point out the truth about the difficulties and the true remedies. We must persistently, quietly, without injuring or harming anyone or any institution, get at truth. That is the spirit which the poor people of Kaira are teaching us, and that is the spirit we must learn in these days when there are troubles and difficulties, everywhere. (Hear, hear.) That is the kind of spirit we will have to gain for ourselves. It does not mean putting up with unnecessary hardships, and difficulties that can be removed. All such difficulties will have to be removed in course of time but with persistent, patient and uttermost regard for truth. All forms of tyranny, all objects of despotism will have to be removed, not by others but by ourselves. That is the thing we will have to remember.

I have told you in previous weeks of certain great qualities necessary for all work. The spirit of brotherhood, the spirit of independence are essential. Then,

we must cultivate and add to these qualities the virtue of cheerful self-sacrifice—we must be prepared to suffer for ourselves, for our country, for our brothers, so that our children and our children's children may benefit by our sacrifice. Add therefore to the spirit of brotherliness and self-reliance, the spirit of self-sacrifice. In that way we shall be able to proceed step by step to do our work, beneficent and good, without any harm or evil whatsoever. We shall be able to attain success, triumph and victory.

That then is my advice to you for this Saturday. With brotherhood, self-reliance, and independence cultivate the spirit of sacrifice, the greatest of virtues, because without sacrifice the world cannot go on, human endurance cannot go on, civilization cannot progress. Remember those qualities, be united, be independent, and self-realiant, and through the spirit of self-sacrifice, gain that happiness, that freedom, which is the birth-right of every human being.

NINTH MEETING

On July 13th, 1918, the 9th meeting of the Labour Union was held. Between the last meeting, held on June 1st, when Mr. Wadia was not present, and July 13th when he delivered the following important speech, meetings were suspended under circumstances which are narrated below:—

MY BROTHERS : Our first meeting in this place was held on April 15th, and since then on every Saturday we have gathered together here till the end of May. The last time we met was on May 27th. Then I stopped the meetings, and on renewing them to-day, the 13th of July, I think it my duty to tell you exactly

what has happened. You, of your own free will and accord, came to me asking for help and advice, and I came to you to serve you with such poor powers as are mine. You have trusted me, and you have proved that trust by doing what I asked you to do. I know it has been hard for many of you to take quietly the stoppage of the meetings and other advice, which has entailed some inconvenience to you, and I am sorry to say, has brought you some insults from people who ought to know better. But you obeyed me and I thank you for it. Now you will listen to what I have to report.

INTERVIEW WITH THE GOVERNOR

H. E. Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, requested me to see him, which I did on May 21st. He spoke of other things, but the main factor of our discussion was about the Labour Movement in Madras. He did not approve of our meetings, of my lecturing work here, and was suspicious of my influence over you. His chief objection was that the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills were engaged in doing War work. In the first instance he was not aware that all the labourers who came here did not belong only to these two mills: secondly, he was unable to see anything else than the spectre of strikes, difficulties and troubles. I tried to explain to him, but, filled with distrust, he was blind to see the truth. He even did not like the plan of our food stores—he did not like anything. I saw him twice that day, and I refused to give up my work here unless the labourers themselves wanted to stop. He requested me to see Mr. A. P. Symonds and I called at Messrs. Binny & Co., the Agents of the two mills. Mr. Symonds explained things to me and we had a satisfactory talk,

in which one of the Indian Directors also took part. On my return to my office, I wrote the following letter to the Private Secretary of H. E. the Governor, and sent a copy to Mr. Symonds.

May 24th, 1918.

T. E. MOIR, ESQ., I.C.S.,

Private Secretary to H. E. the Governor of Madras,
MADRAS.

DEAR MR. MOIR, As desired by His Excellency, I have seen Mr. A. P. Symonds of Messrs. Binny & Co.

I have fully discussed the question of my work among the labourers at Perambur, and I find that he does not see any harm to his mills in what I am doing. He was under a misapprehension that I had purposely picked out his two mills. I have assured him that at my meetings mill-hands and other labourers not belonging to his mills, attend, which I think will remove any feeling that Sir Clement Simpson might have against me.

Mr. Symonds seemed to be a little surprised at the view His Excellency took, for he does not think that Sir Clement Simpson objected to my work on more than mere general grounds, which any employer of men would naturally raise when he fancied that his men are being "tampered with." However Mr. Symonds has kindly promised to show me round the mills to-morrow, and I feel sure a further talk will thoroughly convince him that I do not mean to do any harm to him or to his chief or to his firm In fact I invited him, and one of the Indian Directors, who was present for some time during our interview, to address the labourers who gather to listen to me on Saturday afternoons. Mr. Symonds also did not see any objection to my supplying food-stuffs at a lower

figure than the labourers are obliged to pay at Perambur, and he told me that the opening of such stores may be considered by his firm.

I am grateful to His Excellency for thus bringing about a friendly relationship between Mr. Symonds and myself, for I am sure it will greatly facilitate my work among the labourers, which I believe to be of great value for the country and the Government.

Under the circumstances I hope His Excellency will look upon my work at Perambur in a different light. I am sorry that I cannot act up to His Excellency's suggestion, and "wind up" this piece of work, for my sense of duty to the poor labourers, at whose call I undertook this work, makes such a course impossible.

As Mr. Symonds does not seem to hold that Sir Clement would take the view His Excellency feared he would take, I hope His Excellency will not regard my response to his call for co-operation as inadequate. If, however, His Excellency is not in a position to see his way to accept such co-operation as I can offer, I have only to assure His Excellency that it will not deter me from doing what I can to help His Excellency's very difficult work in the coming months. I need not add that if now or at any time, I can be of any service to His Excellency, I shall be most happy to render it.

Sincerely yours,

B. P. WADIA.

P.S.—Will you kindly draw the attention of His Excellency to the further telegrams from Masulipatam, regarding the looting of food shops? (*New India* of May 22, p. 9)

I am afraid we shall have to face this situation in

Madras at a not far distant date, and that is what I am trying to avoid by my scheme of opening stores. It is time that His Excellency's Government took in hand the subject of the control of food. B. P. WADIA.

LETTER EXPLAINED

It is necessary that I should explain this letter a little. His Excellency, during our interview, wished co-operation from me in the War work, the War situation having become very grave; the co-operation he wished for was one of passive and negative character—he wanted me to give up all agitation, particularly the Labour movement! and on that condition, and on that alone, he would invite me to a meeting he was convening. As I refused to accede to those terms, I was not invited. The reasons for those terms may be various; the one given to me was that Sir Clement Simpson, the head of Messrs. Binny & Co., would not be able to work on the same Committee with me when I was engaged in the Labour work!

MILLS VISITED AND SUGGESTIONS MADE

Let me continue my story: Mr. Symonds very kindly showed me over the two mills, and we had another discussion, as a result of which I wrote the following letter to him, which will show you why it became my duty to stop our weekly Saturday meetings:—

May 30th, 1918.

DEAR MR. SYMONDS,—I promised when I saw you last and when you were good enough to show me round the mills that I would let you know what steps I propose to take on the suggestion you made regarding the stopping of the Labour Union meetings. From your first conversation I presumed that these meetings were not a

serious hindrance to you, though you did not like the movement. From your second talk at the Mills I feel that you look upon them very gravely.

Let me at the outset assure you that I am absolutely at one with you, that whatever else happened to the labourers, they must not be allowed to interfere with the munition work in which they are engaged at your two mills. I have therefore taken steps to enquire into the nature of the grievances of the labourers, and I am narrating to you what I have been told. As to the general excellent condition of your mills, sanitary and otherwise, I have nothing but praise. I have not inspected many mills, but of all those I have, there is no doubt in my mind that yours afford facilities and comfort to the labourers that others do not.

I propose here to give you the more important of the grievances, and shall thank you if you will let me know how you propose to deal with them. If these can be solved in any satisfactory way, I am prepared on my side to persuade the labourers not to hold meetings during the War; at any rate I will not address them myself while the War lasts.

1. The midday recess hour of 40 minutes should be made a full hour. The labourers work for 12 hours at a stretch from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. and 40 minutes' recess is very little. Your recreation grounds, night-school, etc., would produce better results if the working hours were shortened; but I can understand that you may not like to reduce the working hours while you have on hand war contracts. Therefore if you can make the midday recess to full one hour, you will be able to meet the labourers' wish to a great extent.

2. The prices of food-stuffs and clothing material have risen considerably. The recent rise of wages accorded by you is not sufficient. The labourers know that you are engaged in Government contract work, which brings you enormous profits; they feel that they are not getting a legitimate share of it. Under ordinary circumstances they would merely grumble, but the very high market prices make them feel the injustice of it. They know that through the efforts of Mr. Gandhi, mill-hands in Ahmedabad got an increase of over 20 per cent; a similar rise, they feel, should be given by you. These are the main grievances and the future harmonious working very much depends on how you solve them.

The following are minor points, but by no means to be entirely put aside.

3. A number of grievances which are reducible to harsh treatment of labourers by European officers. The general treatment given by the European Agents of the mills to their European officers is looked upon as being very partial; the European officers are treated with favouritism, and in some way to the disadvantage of the Indian labourers. Also the European officers are not spoken of by labourers in terms of praise or kindness. Some of them are positively disliked. It is hoped that these European officers at the mills will be instructed by the Agents to treat the labourers more kindly and with consideration. It may well be impressed on these officers that the labourers are human beings with human feelings and thoughts.

4. A better regulation for dismissal of labourers is requested. At present petty officials dismiss men, while the Manager only should possess the power to dismiss;

thus labourers will have a chance of presenting their own case to the Manager. At present they do not get a chance.

5. Every month the labourers are given their pay on the 22nd. Thus their pay for May will be given to them on June 22nd. The labourers would like to have their pay on the 7th of each month. Thus the pay for May should be received by them on June 7th.

6. Wages are cut when machinery gets out of order. This is felt to be unfair. Labourers say that it is no fault of theirs if the machinery goes wrong and they ought not to be made to suffer for it.

There are other points, but they may be left over just for the present. If you can see your way to meet the labourers on the above items, it would facilitate matters considerably. I am prepared to discontinue the meetings while you and Sir Clement Simpson are considering this letter. The labourers will not approve of this, I fear, but I am eager to do all I can to meet your wishes. I request you to consider the matter and let me have an answer to this as early as convenient.

Sincerely yours,

B. P. WADIA,

President, Madras Labour Union.

A copy of this letter was sent to Government House with a covering letter as under :—

30th May, 1918.

DEAR MR. MOIR,

In continuation of my letter to you dated the 24th May, I beg to send you herewith copy of a letter I have forwarded to Mr. A. P. Symonds, to-day.

Yours sincerely,

B. P. WADIA.

NO REPLY

No reply came from either. In fact Mr. Symonds has not even now acknowledged the letter. In spite of non-acknowledgment either by the Private Secretary to His Excellency or Mr. Symonds, I adhered to my programme.

Now my letter to Mr. Symonds was written on May 30th. Four weeks after I wrote once again to the Private Secretary thus:

DEAR MR. MOIR, *28th June*, 1918.

I forwarded to you for His Excellency's perusal my letter to Mr. A. P. Symonds of Messrs. Binny & Co., dated 30th May, 1918. Will you please inform His Excellency that Mr. Symonds has not replied to my letter, and has not even shown the courtesy of acknowledging it. One full month has elapsed and my promise has been kept; for during the period I have not addressed a single meeting of the laburers at Perambur. In fact no meetings have been held and the labourers have spent their Saturday afternoons at semi-religious Harikatha performances. It was with some difficulty that I have been able to persuade the labourers to go without regular meetings. They have found some relief by our regulated sale of food stuffs. As advised by His Excellency, I have tried my best to co-operate with Mr. Symonds, but I regret I have not been helped in any way. I deem it necessary to bring this fact to the notice of His Excellency.

Sincerely yours,

B. P. WADIA.

T. E. MOIR, ESQ., I.C.S.,

Private Secretary to H. E. the Governor of Madras,

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, OOTACAMUND.

In answer to this I received the following:

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
30—6—'18.

DEAR MR. WADIA,

I write to acknowledge your letter of 28th June, which I shall place before His Excellency, who will, I have no doubt, be glad to hear that at this time the meetings have been suspended even temporarily.

Yours sincerely,
(SD.) T. E. MOIR.

Since June 30, I have heard nothing from His Excellency; my letter to Mr. Symonds remains unanswered.

OFFERS TO STRIKE

While I was doing this you will remember that I have asked you continuously to be quiet and give no causes for complaint. I have received twice from you largely signed petitions, suggesting a strike, which I asked you not at all to contemplate. Some individuals among you have been mistreated and even to them my advice has been to suffer and be strong. Your Saturday meetings were wisely converted by you into Harikatha performances. Our food stores have done good work for the members of the Madras Labour Union, and I thank you for obeying my orders, and congratulate you on the control you have shown over your pent up and ruffled feelings.

ATTACKS

Now my Brothers, you will see the importance and value of our work if I tell you that the European newspapers have thought it necessary to speak against us. *The Statesman* of Calcutta, for instance, has attacked you and me. The local *Madras Mail* has also done so,

and is followed by the *Madras Times*. Discussion has been going on in the Press, but I have not thought it necessary or expedient to answer the criticisms. Only one point in all these criticisms, it is necessary for me to refer to. It is said that the Carnatic and Buckingham Mills are excellent factories which give all sorts of comforts and conveniences to their men. This is true. I have said so to Mr. Symonds in my letter. What is necessary to draw attention to here is this: All these comforts and conveniences for the labourers are planned from the point of view of the employer, who has kept in mind his own interests. Mr. M. C. Sitaraman, the late Assistant Weaving Master of the Carnatic Mills, has shown this clearly in his two articles to the Press, dated May 30th and June 8th.

BINNY & CO. AND "NEW INDIA."

My friend Mr. K. C. Desikacharri wrote against our movement and challenged me "To compare the condition of the working men employed in his Press, (*New India* Press) with those of the mill operatives in question." I can safely take up the challenge. My men love me as the labourers of Carnatic, Buckingham or Choolai Mills do not love their superiors. My men feel and are treated as members of a family, are not kicked, necked or abused as you often complain to me. They have not the soul-killing terror enveloping them day after day. The treatment accorded to them is one of respect for human brothers, divine in their nature, however low their stage of evolution may be. That is the difference, and if Mr. Symonds and his European assistants behaved like gentlemen towards these labourers and treated them as brothers as my *New India* men are treated,

these labourers would never have come to me, just as my men will never dream of going to Mr. Desikachari if they had a grievance. What is the use of recreation grounds and night schools and museums when men's self-respect is killed and they are desired not to show it? What is the good of educative and pleasure-giving institutions when the very soul of the labourer is crushed, when he has no time from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. during which period he can only sing:

For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind come in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places
Turns the sky in the high window blank and realing,
Turns the long light that drops down the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling.
All are turning, all the day, and we with all
And all day, the iron wheels are droning;
And sometimes we could pray,
"O ye wheels" (breaking out in a mad moaning)
"Stop! be silent for to-day."

Mr. Desikachari and his like ought to develop a little imagination and look at the problem from a spiritual point of view.

The Rickshaw-wallas

But let me go on with the story of our work. While you were waiting and watching, often not understanding why I remained quiet and ordered that no meetings should be held, the price of food-stuffs continued to go up, and the economic pressure caused disturbance in several places in the Presidency. In our

city of Madras the Rickshaw-wallas had to strike and they came to me for advice and help, and we have formed a Rickshaw-wallas' Union. My friend, Mr. E. L. Iyer, Bar-at-law, has helped me in that work, and you will be glad to learn that we will soon be owners of ten rickshaws, which are given to our members. The rickshaws are presented to the Union by the friends of the poor and by patriots who love this country. From the income derived from the rickshaws, the funds of the Union are strengthened, and we expect and hope to do good work.

The New Regulation

But now let me come to the most important point. I have good reasons to believe that the Government are going to apply repressive measures to all those who come here to help you. A couple of days ago the *Madras Mail*, which is told first all official news, and which is a favourite with the Government, has published the following :

"A new rule issued under the Defence of India Act makes salutary provision against the stirring up of industrial agitation among classes engaged in work necessary for the successful prosecution of the War. This rule is worded as follows: " (1) No persons shall do or attempt to do any act calculated or likely to impede, delay or restrict work necessary for the successful prosecution of the War or shall dissuade or attempt to dissuade any person from taking up such work ; and (2) if any doubt arises as to whether any work is necessary for the successful prosecution of the War a certificate to that effect signed by a Secretary to the Government of India shall be conclusive proof on the point." The

maximum penalty for violation of the rule is three years imprisonment with a fine."

What does this mean? It means that if I come here, and if the Chief Secretary to the Government of India says that the work done by any of the factories from which you come, is War-work, and if the Government says that I have interfered with it, then I am to be sent to prison for three years and fined, and as I am a poor man and cannot pay the fine, the period of imprisonment will be increased.

The Future Work

That being so, I must speak to you very freely and frankly. If you want me to lead you, and I know that is the desire of many of you, then you will do me the favour of absolutely obeying me and of carrying out my wishes. The first thing I want to impress on you is that the War work in which some of you are engaged is, from the big national point of view, a very important work. As a religious thinker, I believe that unless the Germans are defeated, you and I in this country, will not be successful. This War is a war between the Powers of Darkness and the Powers of Light; and Germany stands for the powers of darkness—tyranny and oppression. The Allies, amongst whom is our Government, say that they are fighting for Freedom. The case of the English people in India is rather peculiar. They are on the side of the good and yet the ways they adopt in this country seem very much like the ways of the Germans, who are haughty, arrogant and careless of Freedom and Justice. Our work therefore is very difficult. We want to help the Allies; we want them to win the War; and yet we want that those who

display German tendencies in this country should be opposed. Think over what I am saying and you will see why I do not want you to go on strike. If by going on strike you were affecting the pockets of Messrs. Binny & Co., I would not mind, for they are making plenty of money ; but by such a step you will injure the cause of the Allies ; our soldiers, who have to be clothed, will be put to inconvenience and we have no right to trouble those who are fighting our King's battles, because a few Europeans connected with these Mills and this Government are acting in a bad manner. Therefore we must have no strikes.

As to our meetings : If I come here every Saturday and speak to you, you may rest assured that the Government will under some pretext or another arrest me under the new Rule of the Defence of India Act and put me into prison. Now, I am not at all afraid of going to prision, but I must ask you first whether you want me to risk my freedom at this hour. A very great and important fight for Home Rule for India is going on now. If we get Home Rule, all of us will be free men instead of slaves. Now, if I have to go to prison, I would prefer to go on the issue of Home Rule. Home Rule is the big problem, your labour troubles are included in it, are a part of that big problem. If we gain Home Rule, all your labour troubles will be solved, and therefore it is my view that if I have to go to prison, I should be sent there, because of what I speak or write on Home Rule. I want your opinion on this point as soon as you can give it me.

The value of our work is very great. It is, broadly speaking, twofold. I come here because first I want to

better your prospects of life. You have certain grievances, which, on examination, seem to me to be quite genuine and should be removed. The second is that you must receive a response to your desire for knowledge about, and interest in, the great things that are happening in our country to-day. It is very peculiar that western educated Indians have been blamed by Government for being careless of the welfare of their poor countrymen like you. When a person like me comes in your midst and tries to help you then also the Government blames. I do not see why His Excellency Lord Pentland or Sir Clement Simpson or Mr. Symonds or anyone else should object to our meetings. The fact is, Brothers, that they distrust us. They fear that we are going to harm them. Why should they be afraid if all they do and say is all right? If truth is on their side they would not mind the effects of the good work we are doing together. What has been my advice to you in these meetings? I have told you to be fearless, to respect yourselves, to resent any insults offered, to be united, for united you will stand and divided you will fall.

We must carry on our work. We must realise the sympathies of other leaders and plan what we should do. The first requisite is that you who are members of the Labour Union must decide what it is you want. Next, do not be hasty in action; do not be rude in speech or rough in manner at your Mills; be polite and obedient but also respectfully protest if bad treatment is meted out to you. By your good conduct and exemplary behaviour, shame those, Indians or Europeans, whose speech and manner are rude and rough. Report every

single case of grievance at the Labour Union Office and I promise to do whatever is necessary. Whatever you do, do not strike ; some of you feel very strongly and are apt to act without previously consulting me ; I appeal to you not to do that, for thus you will bring the whole movement into discredit. Time is on your side ; our cause is sacred ; what we say is the truth ; our ways should be those of peace, sacrifice and suffering. Be courageous, be firm and trust in God and your own Atman. Difficulties are ahead of us but triumph will crown our labours, if you, the poor hard worked, ill-fed brothers, will join hands with us and win Freedom for our dear Motherland.

Out of the above speech arose the somewhat peculiar incident which in fairness to all concerned must be narrated at this stage.

Messrs. Binny & Co., sent a letter through their solicitors, Brightwell and Morseby, dated 24th July, as under :—

HIGH COURT HOUSE, MADRAS,
24TH JULY, 1918.
BRIGHTWELL & MORESBY,
MADRAS,
Solicitors & Notaries.

B. P. WADIA ESQ., MANAGER, "*New India*".

Sir,

We have been consulted by Mr. A. P. Symonds, Manager of Messrs. Binny & Co., Ltd., and Director of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills Co., Ltd. with reference to a speech made by you at Perambur, on the 13th instant, reported in the newspaper *New India* of Monday July the 15th headed "Madras Labour Union Saturday's meeting. "Important speech of Mr. Wadia".

We are instructed to call your attention to the satatements made by you as follows :

"My men love me as the labourers of Carnatic. Buckingham or Choolai Mills do not love their superiors. My men feel and are

treated as members of a family, are not kicked, necked or abused as you often complain to me. They have not the soul-killing terror enveloping them day after day. The treatment accorded to them is one of respect for human brothers, divine in their nature, however low their stage of evolution may be. That is the difference and if Mr. Symonds and his European assistants behaved like gentlemen towards these labourers and treated them as brothers as my *New India* men are treated, these labourers would never have come to me just as my men will never dream of going to Mr. Desikachari if they had a grievance" and then again. " The case of the English people in India is rather peculiar. They are on the side of the good and yet the ways they adopt in this country seem very much like the ways of the Germans who are haughty, arrogant and careless of freedom and justice. Our work therefore is very difficult. We want to help the Allies ; we want them to win the War and yet we want that those who display German tendencies in this country should be opposed."

The above statements convey a distinct implication that the mill hands in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills have been ill-treated by Mr. Symonds and his European assistants and are defamatory of him and them.

We are instructed to call upon you unconditionally to withdraw the statements made by you at the meeting held by you and reported in *New India* as above mentioned and also to publish a full and unqualified apology to Mr. Symonds and the European assistants in the Buckhingham and Carnatic Mills in the next issue of that paper and of the *Madras Mail* and the *Indian Patriot*, such withdrawal and apology to be printed in the same type and in as prominent a position as the defamatory statements of which Mr. Symonds complains.

Should you decline to adopt this course, legal proceedings will be instituted against you either civilly or criminally or both without further notice and in respect of the civil proceeding our clients will claim substantial damages. Yours obediently,

(Sd.) BRIGHTWELL AND MORESBY.

To the above letter Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar as Mr. Wadia's Vakil sent the following answer:—

To Messrs. Brightwell and Moresby, Madras.

Dear Sirs,

Your letter to Mr. B.P. Wadia, dated the 24th July 1918, has been placed in my hands by him with instructions to reply thereto as follows :—

I am instructed to state that of the two statements in his speech to which you draw attention, the latter statement has no reference to the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills Co., and was not intended to refer to them. If, however, your clients consider that the statement conveyed any imputation against them, my client desires me to say that no such impuation was intended to be made by him and that he unconditonally withdraws the same.

As regards the first statement, my client, in the honest and *bona fide* belief in the information supplied to him by the labourers (who said that they themselves had suffered) which he believed to be true, made the statement in public interest and that too in answer to an attack on him in the press. It was not at all intended or meant to defame your clients. As your clients take exception to the statement as defamatory of them, my client feels sorry that his remarks should have been so interpreted and therefore hereby unconditionally withdraws the statement.

I am forwarding for publication to *New India*, *Indian Patriot* and the *Madras Mail* your letter to my client and his reply thereto.

Yours faithfully,

C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR.

On the above correspondence the following note written by Mrs. Annie Besant appeared, entitled "Not on side issues," in *New India*, July 31st 1918.

"It is right that I should say that the responsibility for the apology of my colleague Mr. B. P. Wadia, rests on me. In the great struggle for Indian Freedom, we cannot spare our bravest soldiers from the battle-front except for the sake of that Freedom.

They must not be captured on side issues. The Labour struggle, important as it is, is, in this great campaign, a side issue. Winning Home Rule, Labour wins its Freedom. Till it is won, Labour's champions, if Home Rulers, will be struck down under any convenient pretext. I feel sure that the hatred felt against Mr. Wadia for his Home Rule propaganda would mean the possibility of his being sent to gaol on this technical charge of defamation, and no plea that the statement he made was in the public interest would avail. I have therefore asked him to withdraw the defamatory words, and he is a sufficiently good soldier to obey the one whom he regards as his leader, and not to go to prison till he goes for Home Rule. To that great cause I will not grudge him if the need arise.''

THIRTEENTH MEETING

On August 17th 1918 the 13th meeting of the Labour Union was held. Mr. B. P. Wadia presided and made the following speech:—

MY BROTHERS,—It gives me great pleasure to be in your midst this afternoon. I am not well and so will not be able to give you a long speech to-day. But I thought it necessary to come to you to show that I have kept up my interest in our common work. As I am going to Bombay to attend the Special Congress and will be away for some time, I thought it necessary to put in my appearance at this meeting. When in Bombay I shall see many of my friends who are not labourers but mill-owners and who are interested in industry, and I shall put before them your story and your position. When I am away I would advise you to keep up with your meetings and patiently go on with your work. Every Saturday the meeting will be arranged for and you must all gather together here and keep up with your work so that when I come back after a month's time I shall find you holding your meetings and carrying on your work.

TWO RESOLUTIONS PASSED

One of the members of the Union moved the following resolutions in Tamil:—

(1) That this meeting of the Madras Labour Union requests the All-India Congress Committee to consider our grievances as detailed in our President, Mr. B. P. Wadia's, letter to the Manager of the Mills and take such steps as are necessary. (2) That this meeting further urges the Congress in its selection of delegates to choose at least one who would speak with authority and knowledge of the grievances of the Indian labourers and their representation in the reformed Indian Council.

The resolutions were put and carried unanimously.

MR. B. P. WADIA

I shall try and put these two wishes of yours conveyed in the two resolutions before the All India Congress Committee, but I am afraid there is not much to be done at the present moment regarding the first resolution. At any rate, I will try my best to speak privately to all the members of the All-India Congress Committee about your grievances and see what they can do with the same. As for the second resolution we shall certainly see that one of the delegates who go to England is posted up with all the information regarding your troubles and your grievances. Perhaps it is possible that my chief, Mrs. Besant, may allow me myself to go to England as one of the delegates, and in that case your grievances will be fully represented before the labour-members.

THE LOCK-OUT OF MESSRS. BINNY & CO. OF OCTOBER 1918.

A lock-out was declared in the Buckingham and

Carnatic Mills. The attitude of Mr. Wadia towards this unfair lock-out is described in a letter to the Press of October 29, 1918, from which we take the following :

I will be present at a meeting of the Perambur Labourers this afternoon at about 4 P.M. and will advise them *en masse*, as I advised their few leaders who came to me yesterday, to obey the unfair order of their employers. Months ago, speaking to them, I told them that I did not want to see the work of the Mills stopped as they were helping our soldiers ; I still hold to that view, and, in spite of provocation by Messers. Binny and Co., I shall do all in my power to persuade the labourers to implicitly obey the rule of presence at 6-15 A. M. ; if Messers. Binny and Co., change the hour to 6 A. M. or 5-30 A. M. my advise will be the same. Secondly, I believe it is necessary for our labourers to learn the lesson of sacrifice and suffering, and thereby gain the wider and spiritual view of forgetting as much as possible their smaller selves. Under the circumstances I hope the labourers will respond to my call, and even if they do not, the fault certainly will not be so much theirs as their employers.' But I know my Labour Union men and I believe they will do as advised.

Yours, &c.
B. P. WADIA.

A meeting of the workmen of the two mills during the lock-out was held on October 29th, 1918 and Mr. B. P. Wadia made the following speech.

MY BROTHERS.—We are met here under peculiar circumstances and I need not describe to you what those circnmstances are. You know exactly what has happened. When some of your friends came to me yesterday,

I gave them a certain piece of advice and I am sorry I was not able to be present at yesterday evening's meeting as I was engaged elsewhere. Studying carefully the situation that has arisen and considering also that I am putting before you in giving this advice, an appeal for a great deal of self-sacrifice, I still venture to do that because I know you will do what is right and just; also because I know that you will expect from me nothing but words of truth and of justice. It seems to me that the employers at the two mills—the Carnatic and Buckingham Mills—have behaved unfairly and unjustly in what they have done, but other people's acts of injustice or unfairness should not be our concern. We want to find out what actually is the best way for us, what is the way of truth and what is the way of justice that we shall follow irrespective of other people's conduct or opinion. Taking into consideration all the aspects of the case I give you, as a sincere friend of yours, the advice to promptly and implicitly obey the order of the Mill Manager and the employers. I understand that yesterday the order was that you should go to the Mills at 6-15 A. M. To-day I understand that the order is that you should go there at 6 o'clock in the morning. My answer to-day is that if you want to be true to your principles and ideals of the Labour Union, be present there to-morrw morning at 6 o'clock. (Applause.) If to-morrow Sir Clement Simpson or his assistants give you an order that you shall be present at 5-30 in the morning, please see that the day after to-morrw you go at 5-30 A. M. (Applause). There are considerations here which we must weigh very carefully. Some months ago I told you that as long as

the War lasts, as long as these two Mills are engaged in Government work, so long our duty will be not to have any strikes. We have had no strike. A lock-out is forced upon us for no fault of yours. For this lock-out, the employers of the Mills and they alone are wholly responsible. They have been committing a mistake and they have given as their excuse certain statements. They say: "We want the men to come at 6-15 A. M. and they won't come." I say go at 6 o'clock and if the mill employers order you to go at 5-30 A. M. you will have to go there at 5-30 A. M. Our business is to see that the Mills are kept open, running and in working order. Our business is to see that the Mills are not closed. If the Mill agents or employers want to close the Mills for their own purpose, let them take the responsibility. At the present moment the Mills are closed and the responsibility is sought to be thrown on you. That is not a fair way of doing things I admit, but our ancient Dharma teaches us to meet unfairness with fairness, and I say to you to obey implicitly for the moment even the unfair demand of the Mill agents and the employers, and when you have done that, we shall see what we shall do in the next instance. It may be— I don't say that it is so—that for certain commercial and economic reasons the Mill agents want to close the Mills, that they would rather shut the Mills for 10 or 15 days or one month or two months, and it may be that they are trying to arrange the shutting of these Mills and at the same time to throw the blame on our Labour Union work. Therefore my advice to the weavers here and all others is to go in a body, not only five or six, to Sir Clement Simpson and say "We are

willing to come at 6 o'clock". If he wants you to go there at 5-30 A. M. say to him "We shall come at 5-30 A. M." Then we shall be able to see what we will do in the next instance. Nothing but good will come out of this struggle for us. Let us suffer, let us be strong, and prove to the Government that in the War time we have looked loyally to its requirements, and that if there is anyone to be found out for a charge of disloyalty, they must look elsewere, in other directions than in the direction of the Labour Union. That is my advice to you and I hope that you will follow it the first thing to-morrow morning. (Applause).

The men were asked to say whether they were all prepared to follow the advice of Mr. Wadia. One of the men said that the employees were prepared to follow the advice tendered to them, but the object of the Mill authorities was to put down the Labour Union and its work, and if the men obeyed the order about the time of attendance at the Mills, the Mill authorities would ride rough-shod and become more inexorable in their demands.

Mr. Wadia told the men that whatever difficulties might be created in the work of the Union, they must try to overcome them patiently and give no room for the allegation that the employees disobeyed the order and struck work and so the Mills had to be closed.

Those who were prepared to attend the Mills at whatever time they were ordered to do so, were asked to signify their wishes by holding up their hands. There were a few dissentients.

All the employees then expressed a unanimous resolve to be present at the Mill gates next morning at

6 o'clock and wished to know what their next move should be, if they were not admitted into the Mills even at 6 o'clock. Mr. Wadia told them that their preparedness to attend at 6 A. M. would be communicated to the Mill agents that evening and if they were not admitted, they might gather at their place of meeting when what their next move should be would be considered and decided upon.

According to the advice of Mr. Wadia the workmen presented themselves before 6 A. M. at the Mill's gates but still the lock-out was continued. Mr. B. P. Wadia was then telephoned for by the labourers. Mr. Wadia arrived and informed them that Mr. Alexander, had last evening said to one of the representatives of the Labour Union that the case of the labourers will be considered if 16 of them—8 to represent each mill—would go to him this morning at 7 A. M. The meeting of the Labour Union elected the representatives accordingly and deputed them to meet Mr. Alexander. These men discussed matters with him and were told to be present at 6 A. M. to-morrow, when the gates would be open.

At 3-30 P. M. a meeting of the Labour Union was held. About 3,000 people who lived nearer the meeting place than the rest were present and cheerfully acquesced in their President's injunction that they should be early enough at the Mills next morning to be able to be in by six.

Mr. Wadia addressing the meeting said:—

MY BRETHREN,—You are all aware of what happened this morning. At our Labour Union Meeting we elected 16 representatives to go to the employers to

discuss matters regarding the opening of the Mills. The result of our representatives' talk is that the Mills will be opened to you at 6 o'clock to-morrow morning. Now, with the trouble which is just ending and ending because you have been wise, a new feature of our work comes out before us. What looks apparently as not a triumph is, in reality, a great victory for the Labour Union. The nature of that triumph and victory you will be able to understand a few weeks hence. It has become necessary now to keep on with our work to come together often and think about the problems we have to solve in the Labour Union Meetings. We have been going very slowly in the past months. In the future months our pace will be more regular and will be better attended. I want you to take more interest in the work of the Labour Union than you have done in the past. I have therefore appointed our friend Mr. N. Dandapani Pillay to be in the regular charge of the Labour Union work and he will attend office the whole day, every day for some months to come. (Cheers.) He will be at the Labour Union office from morning till evening. He will register all the complaints and everything that you have to say, so that I shall get a daily report from him. And also he will attend to all the work regarding the particular Labour Union which is a very strong body. Therefore, I would request you to see Mr. N. Dandapani Pillay at the Labour Union Office every day if you have anything to say to him. And I will repeat to-day the advice that I have given you at the very first meeting: that you must stand firm and united if you want to win the victory in the coming days. We are thinking of great projects and as we have now the

Central Labour Board where various leaders of the city of Madras will come together, you may be assured that something tangible will be done for you at an early date. Next Saturday being Deepavali day there will be no meeting but the following Saturday we will meet here, and I shall try to be present to speak to you. I want you all to be present then and listen to what I have to say to you.

PARTIAL ADMISSION OF MEN

The labourers working in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills who had been shut out of the Mills during the last three or four days agreeably to the insistent advice of Mr. B. P. Wadia to the men to obey the orders of the Mill authorities, appeared at the gates of the Mills this morning punctually at 6 o'clock. As the thousands of the men were entering the Mills through the half closed gates and while not all who were outside had gone in—about 2,000 men were left outside the gates of each of the two Mills—even the half open gates were suddenly closed. The Dy. Commissioner Rao Bahadur Bhavanandam Pillay, about ten European Sergeants and several Constables who were there, asked the men left outside the Mills to go back to their houses. Sir Clement Simpson was also there. One of the men present outside told Mr. Bhavanandam Pillay that all the men had come to the Mills long before 6 A. M. in spite of the rain, in obedience to the advice given to them by Mr. Wadia, and it was a matter for deep regret that all of them were not admitted into the mills. It was represented to Mr. Bhavanandam Pillay that as the men had been treated so unfairly by the Mill authorities in spite of their having followed the advice of

Mr. Wadia to implicitly obey the orders of the Mill authorities, if no satisfactory settlement of the dispute between the employers and employees could be arrived at, the blame would rest on the Mill authorities and not on Mr. Wadia or the employees. Mr. Bhavanandam Pillay had a talk with Sir Clement Simpson but the latter would not agree to let the men in but said that if the men desired, they might get in at 12-30 P. M., for half day work. The men held a meeting ontside and they were advised to go to the Mills at 12-30 P. M., and get in if admitted by the Mill Manager. The gates are fifteen feet long but one gate is completely shut and the other gate is kept half open as the men enter it.

Commenting on the Lock-out in its issue of 31st October, " New India " had the following in its editorial columns.

WHERE IS THIS TO END?

WE elsewhere publish a report of the occurrences at the gates of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills. Though the men were ready at the gates prior to 6 A. M.,—many of them had to come from long distances drenched in the rain—they could not all get in because of the narrowness of the entrance, and those who remained behind were kept out. Whose fault is it that the gate is too narrow for the men to enter in time? The trouble will be more serious in the noon, because the people who could not enter this morning, in the course of half an hour, have to go out, take their food and enter again within the same period. Is that feat humanly possible? And how are the men expected to do this superhuman feat? The Deputy Commissioner of Police was on the scene, and was thus an eye-wit-

ness of the scandal. If these troubles are to go on for some time more, we are afraid the situation in the City will become more and more difficult. An impression has moreover been created among the men, mainly due to Police activities near the mills, that the Government are backing up the employers, though their treatment of the men is clearly unjust, and that again adds to the seriousness of the situation.

EIGHTEENTH MEETING

On October 6th, the 18th meeting of the Labour Union was held to celebrate the victory of the Allies, on all fronts. Mr. B. P. Wadia presided and addressed the meeting on the singnificance of the victory. As a special second meeting (No. 20) was held for the purpose and Mr. Wadia's speech reported, we do not publish this here.

NINETEENTH MEETING

On November 9th was held the 19th meeting of the Union at which Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech :—

My Brothers,—In this meeting the first point that I want to put to you is about our rice stores. I have here a petition from some of our members and I want you to clearly understand the position. Rice is very difficult to obtain in the city of Madras at the present time. Proper arrangements have been made by us and our store will always be kept open. To-morrow, as usual, the stores will be open. On Thursday also, as is requested by some of the petitioners, the stores will be open. But it is very difficult, as I said, to get rice,

and therefore we cannot help restricting sale of rice to members of the Union only. Those of you who are members of the Union and therefore hold a ticket should go to the shop with that ticket. We have issued strict instructions that no one who does not produce a ticket should be given rice. I request you to remember that without a ticket the shop will not be able to supply you the required rice.

The second point that I want you to realise is that the rice problem is becoming every day more and more difficult of solution. As far as the Labour Union members are concerned, they will be all right: they will get rice at our shop; but for others in the whole city of Madras, nay in the whole Presidency, the situation is grave. Therefore I want you in this meeting assembled of our Labour Union to pass a resolution which I am going to move from the chair. If you pass it, I propose to send a copy of it to the proper authorities. The resolution is as follows:

"That in view of the increasing difficulty experienced in obtaining food-stuffs in the city and of the unprecedented rise in prices during the past few weeks, the Madras Labour Union strongly appeals to the Government of India to conserve the available stock of food-stuffs by an immediate prohibition of all exports and to take more effective measures to secure its proper distribution in the country."

'The resolution was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.'

Mr. Wadia continuing said:

Now that you have passed this resolution I will send it to the proper authorities and let us hope that other

bodies who work for the poor people, as also political associations, will send similar resolutions, and urge the Government of India to take early steps. Last time when I was here I announced that Mr. Dandapani Pillay will be in charge of the Union work. He begins that work to-night and will be here the whole time all day long and as I advised you last time I would request you to go to him with all your troubles and difficulties. The work of the Reading Room also will be more carefully attended to in future and arrangements are being made for the opening of medical relief for the members of the Labour Union. In the course of the next few days, we shall be able to show still better result of our work as a Union than we have done in the past, and in that work I want you to help me and Mr. Dandapani Pillay by speaking to him frankly and freely, and telling him whatever you have to say.

TWENTIETH MEETING

On November 19th 1918 was held the 20th meeting of the Labour Union. Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech:—

My Brothers:—We have met here on this occasion which is for the whole of this country and the Empire a very happy one. But it is also an occasion for the happiness of a great number of people who are not Indians or who are not citizens of the British Empire. In the events that have taken place during the last few days we have seen the triumph of truth over falsehood, of liberty over tyranny. Now it is a teaching of our ancient books that when a great event happens in the world, it produces a spiritual effect in all parts of this

globe. This great event in the history of the world which we have witnessed during the last few days affects us here, though we are thousands of miles from the scene of the great happening. What has happened in the various countries of Europe affects us exactly in the same fashion as it affects the people of those countries. Now what has happened there? What has happened there is that tyranny, autocracy, unrighteousness, pride, have seen the destruction of themselves.

THE RESULTS OF ARMISTICE IN INDIA

Now what has happened there must also happen everywhere because when tyranny is destroyed in one country of the world it necessarily gives enthusiasm, help and instruction to the people in other countries of the world to learn the lesson that the great happening gives. (Cheers.) Now we are affected in this country because we have always believed—and because we believed, we were able to give our money and men for the battles of the King-Emperor—that tyranny and autocracy in Europe, especially in Germany and Austria, will break and the result that we have got to-day— because blood has been poured out, because money has been spent—the result we have got at the cost of that is so supreme for the benefit of the human race, that we may go down on our knees and thank God that we were participants in the victory and that we were on the side of right. Now we have all to remember that there are people in this country of India who, in the way of thinking and in their habits, though not exactly like Germans and Austrians, come near their form of character and life. Now therefore our duty will be to wipe from this our country all those expressions of auto-

cracy, tyranny, unrighteousness and unbrotherly conduct. And how are we going to do it ? In Russia, in Germany, in Austria, the winning of that autocracy has to be attained by bloodshed, by misery and suffering and by deaths of thousands upon thousands of people. But in this country of India we want to attain that happy and peaceful condition without bloodshed, without difficulty, without trouble, by the weapons of truth and the arms of righteousness. Before the War there existed in the world a few great autocracies where tyranny was rampant and human liberty was curtailed. Of these few countries Russia was the first to wipe out that autocracy. It has been wiped out in Turkey, in Austria and in Germany. But there are still certain countries in the world where forms of tyranny exist and our country is one of them. Therefore in this country we will study very carefully our conditions, and above all stand united, all together, Hindus and Muhammadans Christians and Parsis, Jains and Sikhs, Brahmanas and Non-Brahmanas. We have been devising plans to bring about changes in our Government in a peaceful manner.

THE PART OF THE WORKING CLASSES

Now what part are you, the labourers of this country, going to play in this great work that is going to take place ? Remember that the people who have won this great victory in various European countries are the labourers, the masses of people who have the love of liberty in their heart, who have fought in the battles and won the prize for themselves. It is not the few leaders, the few generals, the few politicians or statesmen that have brought victory in those parts of the

world. In Germany, in Russia, in Turkey, the Socialists, the Labourers, the masses of the people have worked up to a point where they have gained freedom for themselves. And therefore I want you to realise, as a lesson of the great War, the power that you possess in your own hands and in your own hearts. Remember that on you to a great extent will depend the freedom and the liberty of our country. It is not the few politicians of our country, not the few men is the Legislative Councils of Delhi, Bombay or Madras, not the few educated people who will be able to do much, but it would be you if you take help from them, inspiration from them, give your aid and co-operation to them; then alone the success of your great work will come without harm or injury to anyone. And therefore on this occasion I advise you to study the conditions of your country and of yourselves, and like men stand up for your own opinions, your own ideas, your own rights and your own liberty. Follow no leaders who are not patriots, who do not give you a sound and right advice. In the whole of India there are two political bodies whose opinions and views you ought to follow, whom you should always support, and listen to no other talk, argument or discussion; these bodies are the National Congress and the Muslim organisation, the All India Muslim League. (Cheers.) Those are the two great voices of the Motherland and there is no third voice or authority which you can hear or follow without making due enquiry. The opinions of those two bodies you can follow with certainty, and all other opinions you must consider carefully; look for the opinions that come from the Congress and the Muslim League; and remember

above all—Eurpoeans or Indians, who desire to put you down, or to humble you, are not to be trusted. Assert your independence and follow your own judgment and remember that if you accept an insult you are insulting your country. You are sons of God and the divine spark is within you. In the guidance of this country and in the guidance of the Empire of which this country is a part, as loyal subjects of the King-Emperor, our first duty is to see that our own brothers in our own country are happy and prosperous, before we see to anything else. And so, day after day, when you offer your prayers, pray for the deliverence and freedom of our Motherland so that within the boundaries of the British Empire she may become a free country like other free countries. Let me assure you, when you do offer such prayers, those great Guardians of humanity, those Rishis, who watch our country, will bless you and help you to attain that freedom.

THE SECOND LOCK-OUT

Of Messrs Binny & Co. in Nov.—Dec. 1918.

On the morning of November 27th the second lock-out was declared by Messrs. Binny & Co. in their two Mills, the Buckingham and Carnatic. Its causes and the atmosphere in which the lock-out was declared and the method of handling it from the point of view of the leaders of the Labour Union is well brought out in a leading article in *New India* of November 28th :

"The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills have ordered a lock-out on the ground that the Manager and the Accountant of the first and the Weaving Master of the second mill were assaulted yestereday and Monday last,

respectively. The identity of the persons who took part in the mischief could not be made out in spite of the best effort of the jobbers and the maistries. We understand that a number of suspected persons were produced before the assaulted, but without result. The assualt took place, according to our information, at obscure places, and seems to have been the work of a few individuals. The bulk of the workmen are disgusted at such acts and several of them are actively trying to trace the culprits. Needless to say, the Labour Union takes the same view of the mischief. At almost every meeting, Mr. Wadia has been strongly impressing upon them that under no circumstances should force be used or the least sign of indiscipline shown, and every effort is now being made by him to find out whether any member of the Union was even remotely connected with the assault. Such acts are greater hindrances to the work of the Union than any other cause, and he will explain it in unmistakable terms to the members of the Union this afternoon.

It is, however, regrettable that the mills should have been closed on that score. We believe the mill authorities are convinced that the persons who took part in the assaults cannot be any more than a very small fraction of the total number of the operatives; and because of them, is it fair to penalise the vast majority of innocent workmen? The lock-out adds to the discontent among them, which makes it all the more difficult to keep discipline. Even for the purpose of detecting the culprits, it would have been more helpful if the mills had been kept going. There is no ground, not the least, for panic; and we fail to understand how the mill authorities will

improve the situation by the lock-out. Do they think that by adding to the miseries of the operatives, the latter can be made to love them more than at present? And even a day of lock-out is unfair to the vast bulk of the operatives, who, from all accounts, had no hand in the mischief.

This is the second time that the same mills have ordered a general lock-out; and we would request those responsible for the management, the Government and the public to consider what that signifies. Is it not time that the cause of trouble be fully enquired into? Only a few weeks ago, the operatives of the other cotton mill in the City had a far larger number of grievances. There was considerable unrest, and some amount of indiscipline. A lock-out was feared on one hand; a strike was threatened on another; but when the matter was taken up by Mr. Wadia at the suggestion of both parties no difficulty was experienced in settling all the outstanding differences. The Indian workmen are so easily manageable that there is under no circumstances any necessity for lock-outs. Except where the question of the wages comes in, they rarely take any concerted action, and never do we find them co-operating for mischievous purposes. Consequently it must not be difficult for any intelligent and careful, employer to avoid crises like the present one, and even where they occur, the intervention of a third party will end the trouble. Unfortunately, the Government have not in this country created such an arbitration agency, a serious omission, for which there is no justification. Still ways are open for the settlement of the present dispute; and in the interests of both the parties con-

cerned, the Government and the public must take up the matter immediately.

On November 28th evening a meeting was held in view of the situation brought about by the lock-out. About 5,000 people were present. Mr. Wadia presided and gave the following speech:—

Once again in an hour of distress we meet here to consider the situation, arisen because of the strange and uncalled for action of the mill authorities. At the very outset let me tell you that I am extremely sorry to hear of the reports that have come from various sides, that some of the labourers at both the mills—the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills—have behaved in a very regrettable manner. From the very beginning of our Labour Union I have repeatedly advised you not to take to rougher methods which are not inherent in our civilisation, which are not cogent to our culture. Our ways must always be, as I advised you, the ways of constitutional, peaceful and harmonious evolution. All rougher methods of insult by word of mouth, or of assault by hand, or weapon of any kind is to be deprecated by us. I am very sorry to note that advice of mine has not been followed in this particular instance. So far as that action goes, you may not perhaps like my saying so, my sympathy goes entirely with Mill authorities. No factory, no concern employing hundreds or thousands of labourers can afford to put up with indiscipline of that kind or of that description. And therefore because of our duty as members of the Labour Union, with definite principles, we must help the Mill authorities as well as the Police authorities to trace the culprits and

treat them according to the law of the land. I am not saying that what the Mill authorities have done in response—perhaps in an angry response—to the misconduct of a few labourers is right. The action of the Mill authorities cannot be defended. You cannot punish thousands of labourers for the mistake or blunder or even crime of the few, and I do not for one moment uphold the step that has been taken by Messrs. Binny and Co. who are the agents of the two Mills. I have drawn up, after consultation with my colleagues and with some of your leaders, two resolutions to be passed at the meeting.

In the first resolution we regret the incident that is reported to have taken place. I have not all that definite evidence before me, but from what I have heard from various sides, there seems to be little doubt that an assault has been made. In the second resolution we condemn the action of the Mill authorities, and we request them to open the Mills and not cause immense distress to thousands of men especially in these hard times.

Now your duty as members of the Labour Union is clear. Your first duty, if you are true to your principles, is to help in the investigation by the Police and the Mill authorities on the tracing of the culprits. If any one of you know which particular man or men have been guilty of assault, it would be wise for you to go to the Police Commissioner and give him the information that you possess. Though it is very hard. though it is very difficult, I implore you to have some patience and let the anger of the European officer of the Mill die down a little; not to be impatient till they consider the position. Remember what I have told you again and

again from the very first meeting of ours to the last when we met to celebrate the Armistice; sacrifice, continuous self-sacrifice, is necessary on your part.

I have received a petition signed by hundreds of you asking me to request Mahatma Gandhi to come to Madras and aid us in our work. I am considering what steps are to be taken regarding that petition. But remember, if Mahatma Gandhi comes here, he would ask you in the first instance to be prepared to suffer and be strong. Now the strength that we want does not come because we think of assaulting or we think of using abusive or insulting language. Real strength comes to us if we act like brave and courageous men, quit us like gentlemen, and where harm or injury is done we return, as far as it lies in our power, affection and sympathy. I know and I have heard many stories yesterday and to-day and much blame has come to me because I advised you to go to your Mills at 6 in the morning. I know many of you have said to me, "this is the result, because we have gone we have been treated unfairly." Your concern is to see that you behave yourselves properly and in the right manner. You are responsible for your good conduct, you are not responsible for other people's bad conduct. And therefore I would advice you to have patience, to suffer for a while and thus the strength that you will gain thereby will enable us to face this great struggle which is to be carried on not only for the benefit of your own selves but for the benefit of the entire labour population of this city, of this presidency, nay, more, of this country.

Now the two resolutions which we have drawn up are as follows:—

(1) That this meeting of the Madras Labour Union records with extreme regret the reported assaults on the European officers of the two Mills and appeal to all its members to put the principles of the Union into force by helping the Police to trace the culprits.

(2) That this meeting of the Madras Labour Union regrets the action of the Mill authorities in ordering a lock-out of the two Mills, thereby causing intense suffering to labourers in these hard times of economic distress, and hereby urges the Mill authorities to resume work.

On November 29th another meeting was held at which Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech:—

Yesterday afternoon speaking to you in this place I referred to the petition that hundreds among you had signed and given me to request Mahatma Gandhi to come to Madras. Yesterday afternoon after going away from this meeting, I considered that petition for a considerably long time. The only thing about it which I hesitated was that I was not sure about the health and condition of our great leader. Now I learn that Mahatma Gandhi is in good health and therefore I propose a resolution which you should pass at this meeting authorising me to telegraph to Mahatma Gandhi to come immediately to our city of Madras. The resolution runs thus:—

"That this meeting of the Madras Labour Union rejoices at the news that Mahatma Gandhi is in good health and hereby requests its President Mr. Wadia to send a message to Mahatma Gandhi with a prayer that he may immediately come to Madras to assist the labourers in this hour of great crisis."

If you are in favour of this resolution, please show it by raising your hands. I will therefore as soon as I go out of this meeting send to our great leader a telegram giving him all the particulars that I can and I shall let you know the answer as soon as the answer comes into my hands. Meanwhile we are very sorry to note that the request made yesterday in the second resolution has not been granted, and that Messrs Binny & Co. have thought it wise to continue their lock-out. Under the circumstances we have no other recourse than to await developments, for all that we possibly can do has been done. We have offered all the assistance that we possibly can offer. For a mistake of a few people Messrs. Binny and Co. have thought it wise to continue the lock-out which deprives thousands of their labourers of their bread. That at any rate clearly indicates that it is not in their hearts or in their heads that the welfare of the labourers is to be found. Therefore I would request you to have a little more patience till our great teacher comes in our midst, and then by the help of the mature advice that he gives us we will chalk our line of action and see what we can do. Meanwhile we have got to-day in our midst Swami Satyadeva who is a great friend of Mahatma Gandhi, and he will tell you how he worked with him at Champaran where the difficulties of the poorer classes with the planters arose. You will listen therefore to what he has to say, and think over it and thus prepare yourselves to take the advice that Mahatma Gandhi will be able to give you. (Cheers.)

The next meeting took place on November 30. Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech:—

After yesterday's meeting I have been able to send the following telegram to Mahatma Gandhi:

"Madras Labour Union passed this resolution to-day; that this meeting of the Madras Labour Union rejoices at the news that Mahatma Gandhi is in good health and hereby requests its President to send a message to Mahatma Gandhi with a prayer that he may immediately come to Madras to assist the labourers in this hour of great crisis."

And I have added the words:

"Mills unjustly closed, acute suffering among labourers, food-stuffs sold famine prices, no other employment. Starvation feared unless immediately relieved. Labourers willing to follow your instructions implicitly."

This telegram was sent yesterday night.

The days before our leader arrives in Madras we are going to utilise in a particular manner. First we are going to collect all the information that we can about the mills and the kind of treatment meted out to labourers in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills. We will therefore ask you to come here to-morrow and the following days and on all the days that you can find time, taking advantage of this lock-out, and to give us information. We will collect all the information that we can, so that when Mahatma Gandhi comes here he can make use of that information. I would therefore request you that when you give information you do not say anything that is not actually the truth. This is the first work which we are going to do, and whether it takes a few days or many days, we are determined to carry on that work and collect all information that we can collect. That is the first thing I want to speak to you about.

The second thing is that to-morrow at 4 o'clock Mr. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar will speak to you here on the subject of co-operation. I would ask you therefore to be present here and listen to what he has to say on the subject. I have received copies of notices that have been put forward by the Managers of the two Mills to-day, about the gratuity fund but I do not wish to speak about it this evening. As usual, to-morrow being Sunday, our rice store will be opened for members of the Union. Now I cannot speak to you at any length this afternoon because our friend Mr. Kalyanasundra Mudaliar is not here to translate in his usual able fashion. You will have to excuse us to-day. If the lock-out continues on Monday in spite of all the co-operation that we have offered them, we shall meet here on Monday afternoon and I will speak to you at length.

The next meeting took place on December 2nd when 7,000 *labourers were present. The reply to the telegram to Mr. Gandhi was read.*

Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech :—

In reply to the telegram sent to Mahatma Gandhi I have received a reply which I will read out to you. The telegram says : "Not yet out of bed though recovering ; therefore unable come Madras or otherwise help Mill hands." The next step that I propose to take is to write to Mahatma Gandhi to come as soon as his health permits. Meanwhile, as I said the other day, we must go on with our work of collecting such information as will be necessary for our future struggle and for our future fight. With that object in view our friend Mr. E. L. Aiyar will be here to-morrow morning and I re-

quest you to give him all the particulars that he will want from you. He will be present here from 10 o'clock in the morning. That is the first point. The second point is this. You will be glad to hear that we have organised to-day what we will call M. L. U. Employment Bureau. To-morrow morning at about 10 o'clock certain printed forms will be ready. I request you to fill up those forms with the information we want, and those of you who want employment elsewhere will give all the information ; we will see what we can do to give you employment. When all these forms are filled up we may be able to dispatch a number of workers to various parts of the country, for, we are making arrangements with various people who are owners of mills in Bombay and elsewhere and we will be able to find the necessary employment for men thrown out so unjustly by the Carnatic and Buckingham Mills. Next I want you to pass this resolution at this meeting to-day so that we may appeal to the generous instincts of the public of this city. I have drawn up this resolution with the help of our friends :

"In view of the suffering to which the labourers are being put at the present time by reason of high prices and want of employment the Madras Labour Union appeals to the public to assist in organising the M. L. U. Relief Fund." (Cheers.) That is the formal work that we have before us to-day.

Now I want to speak to you on the general situation as it stands this afternoon. It has been given out first by Sir Clement Simpson in an interview with the reporter to the *Hindu* and later in Anglo-Indian organs, the *Madras Times* and the *Madras Mail* that some of

the labourers purposely organised the assault and that the labourers are in possession of information regarding those who made that assault. Now it is a very serious charge to make, for, if Sir Clement Simpson has in his possession any evidence that there has been organised assault that evidence ought to have been given at the same time to the public. In the absence of such evidence coming forward, we refuse to accept such an irresponsible statement. But take for granted for a moment that the information is correct then what becomes of the reputation of the Police of Madras headed by such an energetic and competent police officer as Mr. Armitage? Is the Police Commissioner and his entire police force so devoid of all competence that in spite of the lock-out of several days they have not been able to trace out the culprits? I have appealed to you on the very first day that if you have any knowledge or information in your possession, you should give the benefit of that knowledge or information to us. I and my friends have also made private enquiries and we do not find that there has been organised attempt of the nature that Sir C. Simpson supposes that there exists; and under the circumstances, as each day goes by, the unjustifiable and unjust action of the mill authorities becomes more grave and more serious. But I want you to recognise that the fight is not revolving merely round the number of culprits, may be one or may be more than one, but it is revolving round a great principle, *viz.*, the rights of labourers and the power of control of capitalists. No one is so naive and simple in this city of Madras as to believe that the authorities of the Mills are so foolish and unjust as to

visit the sins of a few hands on 10,000 and more men. Nobody is going to believe that Sir C. Simpson is not intelligent enough to perceive the absurdity of the position that he has taken. Under the circumstances I will once again appeal to you to go on holding your meetings as you are holding, and patiently wait till you find that sense dawns upon the brain of the Mill authorities. All the help and co-operatoin that you as labourers could offer has been offered. You cannot be expected to do what the police of Madras are not able to do. If the police cannot find out the culprits, it is not possible for you to find out. And under the circumstances I would ask you to be patient and go on with the constitutional work that you are carrying on till you prove to all the citizens of Madras and also to your countrymen throughout the land that these European capitalists are doing grossly unjust acts.

And there is one more point that I would like to put to you, which occurred to my mind on the first day, which under the circumstances I did not put, but for which the time has come when I should speak to you. From time to time your political leaders have been told that Government and its officers are the people to care for the poor masses, for those who are not able to speak for themselves. For sixs days now the lock-out has been continuing in the city of Madras. I want to know what Lord Pentland, his Executive Government and his administrators are doing on your behalf. Remember that in this hour of trial, for six days, when Mills have been closed and workmen thrown out, in this city none of the official people have come out giving you help or enquiring after you or ask-

ing about your condition. In all your sufferings you are at least giving one great proof to your countrymen, who are fighting for the political liberty of the Motherland, that what we have been saying is true and what the Government officials have been asserting is false. But above all earthly Governments is the Government of God Himself, and I assure you that in the just and righteous struggle that is taking place, God's blessing is on you, though it is perhaps teaching you through suffering to be united, to stand firm, to carry on the war which you have been carrying on for peaceful purposes.

If the Mills are not opened to-morrow morning then we will meet again at 4 in the evening and I will report to you the progress that has been made during the 24 hours.

On December 4th another meeting was held; about 9,000 *people were present. Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech*:—

I am sorry I was not able to be present yesterday afternoon as an important Committee meeting kept me away. But I have not been idle either yesterday or to-day. I have been busy doing the work on behalf of the Labour Union as I shall show you when I speak to you just now. You remember that the day before yesterday we passed a resolution asking the citizens of Madras to help us with relief fund. I am glad to say that subscriptions are coming in and though they are slow they are coming in steadily. I do not want to announce either to-day or on any of the future days the amount of money that we are collecting; and I will tell you why. In the great war that has just

closed we have been taught one lesson: that whatever you do, you must do in such a fashion that your enemy does not know anything about it. For the same roason I think it will be best for us to do our work quietly and not speak about it. I will keep very strictly the detailed account of all the money that we get, of all the money that we spend, and when this great struggle is over the account will be published in the papers, duly audited. Next I told you that with the help of the Employment Bureau which we formed the day before yesterday, I will be able to find out employment for some of you in other parts of the country. You will be glad to know that that work is also proceeding, and the first batch of men will go out from Madras before many days are over. Now the one point that I want to mention in connection with the relief measure is that the help of the relief fund and the Employment Bureau will be extended only to the members of the Union. Now, those of you who are not members of the Union. I would request you to join immediately so that you may also have the benefit of this relief work. And there is another, and to my mind greater, reason why those of you who have not joined the Labour Union should join it immediately and it is this. The fight that is now going on, I repeat what I have said before, has nothing to do with merely the question of assaults and culprits, but is based on greater and bigger problems, *viz.*, the fight between the labourers who are standing up for their dignity and their right and the capitalists who are trying to put them down. I therefore want you to realise that if in this struggle you stand by the Labour Union you will be able to see for

yourselves the dawning of great and peaceful and more glorious days. And therefore I would request you to remember every morning, every afternoon, every evening, every night, that as members of the Labour Union you have a duty towards it, and see that you are going to perform it at whatever cost. Your duty is the duty of following the path of truth, and as long as you follow truth you have nothing to fear. After this lock-out, at the very first meeting I have advised you to follow the path of truth. If you know, I repeat, those people who have committed the act of assault, please come and inform me. I shall deal with them according to the law of the land. For, some people are repeatedly saying that the members of the Labour Union as well as outsiders know who the culprits are, and it is your duty, as truth-loving people, as people following truth, to come and tell me if you know who the culprits are and in the name of righteousness let us take the next step. In this world where God's laws work, to men who are truth speaking, to men who are just, to men who follow the righteous example of righteous men, there is no harm whatsoever. If your hands are clean, if your hearts are clean, you have nothing to fear and you can go on in your righteous struggle, assuring the mill authorities of your helplessness because you do not know the culprits, nor know anything about them. And that way have patience and go on with your struggle; for the struggle is based on a great truth and a great principle. By your sacrifice and by your suffering for noble truth we will gain a victory, and that not only to you but for the entire country at large.

There is only one more announcement I have to make. To-morrow afternoon at 1 o'clock our rice shop

will be kept open for all the members of the Union and we will meet here again to-morrow at 4 o'clock to consider the situation of the day. This is the appeal which we have issued, over my signature, appealing to the public citizens of Madras for subscriptions to the fund which we have opened.

As a last word I want to tell you—stand united as one man and remember that if there are any divisions in your midst you will not be able to win the victory which I want you to win. I want to give you three words—Unity, Truth, Sacrifice, and according to these you must carry on your work and be sure that triumph will be yours in the end.

In view of the resolution passed at the above meeting, Mr. Wadia as President of the Madras Labour Union issued the following appeal:

The Madras Labour Union Relief Fund

The uncalled-for and unjust Lock-out of 12,000 workmen belonging to the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills compels us to seek the aid of the charitable and thoughtful public of Madras, for the relief of these men. In these times of high prices, with famine staring us in the face, the situation has been critical but is now made unbearable for thousands of the poor. Under the daily advice given to these poor and starving people they have been behaving in an exceedingly law-abiding manner, and through their great suffering are giving the country an example of pure self-sacrifice. In this, the 12,000 workmen are aided by their mothers, wives and children whose condition we may better leave to the public to imagine. We, therefore, earnestly appeal to all the citizens of Madras to contribute their share, how-

ever humble, towards helping these ill-treated countrymen of ours.

B. P. WADIA,
President, Madras Labour Union.

The following notice appeared on the notice board of the two Mills to which reference is made in Mr. Wadia's speech on December 5th :—

NOTICE

The Mill, except the Weaving Department, will run from 6 A. M. till 12 and a full day's pay will be allowed. Wages will be paid from 12 to 1 P. M.

The Weaving shed will remain closed. Those working in the Weaving Department who are desirous of expressing regret for recent misconduct and who are prepared to signify their willingness to resume work and obey orders may register their names between 7 A. M. and 9 A. M. By doing so they may enable the Manager to decide on a date for re-opening the Mill.

The weavers will be paid on the regular pay day for this department, namely Saturday 14th December.

By Order
Manager.

At the meeting on December 5th Mr. Wadia presided and spoke as follows :—

Since our yesterday afternoon's meeting several of us have been hard at work with both the Fund and the Employment Bureau, and I am glad to say that in both departments results have been satisfactory. Also I am glad to note that in response to my appeal to those among you who are not members of the Labour Union altogether during the last three days we have added to

the extent of one thousand new members. (Cheers.) And if more people have not been able to come as members into the Union, it is not your fault but because we have only a few people to work for the Union and take down names of the new members. The work of gathering facts regarding your own conditions of food, of health and other difficulties also has proceeded ahead. I have been able to gather this morning what views and opinions the women members of your families hold on the question of the lock-out. I want you to be a little patient with your people at home, who perhaps do not feel so strongly as you feel (and I can appreciate that you feel strongly) because you have been in the mills while these women have not been there.

Our work has been proceeding along various lines very nicely. The public of Madras are getting more and more interested and are seeing for themselves that the action taken by Messrs. Binny & Co., has been entirely wrong. The public also recognise that Messrs. Binny & Co., by their action have increased the economic distress that already prevailed before in these distressful times. But more than the sympathy of the public of Madras I have very great pleasure in getting the sympathy of your own rank and class and I am glad to say that we received a sympathetic communication from the labourers of Negapatam. This bond of friendship that binds together the labouring classes in two such important places as Madras and Negapatam speaks volumes for the work that we have been doing. You will be glad to know that in the midst of these difficulties and troubles other Labour Unions are proceeding with their work; for instance, this afternoon some of us go to the

opening of the new building that the tramway men have taken for their own purpose. I would ask your permission to give your brothers of the tramway hearty greetings and hope for their prosperity, success and triumphant work. Thus the labourers in various parts of this presidency and various parts of this city will go together united and I am sure that in this time of difficulty which you are undergoing the sympathy and co-operation of the Tramway Union Members is with you. The rice stores which we have opened to-day will also be opened to-morrow but at 3 o'clock.

Now I will repeat what I have said to you yesterday that in this great struggle you should stand united whatever happens. If anyone comes and tells you to do this that or the other thing, please consider very carefully first the position of the Labour Union of which you are members. Remember that all the departments, in the mills are limbs of the body and without the help of the one or the other the entire mill will not be able to work successfully. And therefore see that you stand united, men of different departments, belonging to the same mill and also men of different departments belonging to different mills. Whatever you do, see that considered act is done and I advise you to put forward the claim of the Labour Union and let the Union and its representatives work for you. I would advise you therefore not to allow yourselves to be divided on whatsoever account. Let each department bind itself to the other department and let the two Mill's men stand together as one great solid stone wall. Truth and justice are on your side and therefore if in the way of truth and justice you start I assure you that your triumph and victory will be cer-

tain. I am sure that there is no other way left for us than the honourable way which we have taken, *viz.*, we have said that we are sorry for the assault that has taken place, though we are not in a position to find out the culprits and under the circumstances the action of the Mill Managers cannot be defended. I think I shall not be greatly mistaken if I make bold to say if there are culprits who have committed the assault they are not to be found in this Union. Under the circumstances, my brothers, remember that a great and solemn obligation rests in your hands, the honour, the dignity, the respect of the Labour Union is with you ; I would appeal to you to see that dignity and that self-respect is not at all lowered.

If the Mills do not open to-morrow we meet at 4 o'clock.

On the afternoon of the 6th December a very big meeting was held about 10,000 *people were present to discuss the notice of the Mill authorities which we have already published.*

Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech :

Yesterday evening I was speaking to you about the great virtue of unity and I advised you that all of us must stand together, men of various departments in the two Mills. I told you that the departments of the Mills are like the limbs of a body, and just as when there is disease in one part of the body the whole body pains, so also when there is suffering for one department of the Mill the entire Mill must suffer. That was what I said yesterday evening. This morning as you are aware of a

notice has been issued by the two Mills—notice which all of you must be already aware of. I am not going to give to-day an advice which is different from what I gave you yesterday. I want you to stand united—all departments of the Mills and both the Mills together. Now I do not know what you are going to do to-morrow morning but the advice I would give you is to pass to-day here in this meeting a resolution which will make your path smooth and clear before to-morrow morning. The resolution which after careful consideration with your leaders I have drawn up runs thus:

"This meeting of Madras Labour Union views with great regret the notice issued by the Managers of Buckingham and Carnatic Mills to-day, as the plan suggested to the labourers therein will tend to divide their unity. This meeting re-affirms its regret at the action of some who have committed the assault and are sorry the culprits have not been caught, and hereby appoints 18 men as a Special Committee to negotiate with the authorities and bring about an amicable settlement."

Those who are in favour of this resolution, hold up their hands. (All held up their hands accepting the resolution with acclamation.)

I think we have taken a reasonable, straight-forward and honest course in offering our own hand of fellowship to those people who are responsible for the lock-out. My advice to you would be, see these 18 men and follow them as your leaders if you want to bring this look-out to a triumphant close. Remember that in a great hour of crisis like this you must follow those whom

you have elected to speak for you. If they tell you to go to the Mills, go; if they tell you do not go to the Mills till you hear from them again, do not go to the Mills. Remember that you are like a huge army and while you are fighting, if every one tries to do exactly as he pleases without listening to the words of generals in the fight, success never comes to such an army. Remember that in this struggle it is not a question of grown-up men, of maistries, of jobbers, but it is the cause of every single one of you. For instance the small boys will play a great part in the fight that is now raging, and therefore the little boys in this struggle are as important as head jobbers and maistries. Therefore young and old, of all castes and creeds, as labourers, I say again, stand united. Remember that you are doing a great thing not for yourselves but for all the labourers in this city, in this presidency and in the whole country of India. We do not want to be unreasonable in any way. It is not to our pleasure that the Mills have been closed for the past so many days. We are thankful that after so many days the authorities of the two Mills have seen the unreasonableness of the step they took in declaring that the Mills will be closed until the culprits were found. We are sorry that one particular department has been selected for such punishment. Let us pray and hope that just as light has dawned on the brain and mind of the Mill authorities and they have seen that it is not fair to visit the sins of a few upon thousands of men, so also they may realise that it is no good trying to punish the whole department consisting of thousands of people for the sins of a few men. That is all I have to say to-day. Only one word more I would

add. The work that we have begun of collecting a relief fund is going on very steadily and surely.

Remember, my brothers, that you are fighting a noble fight and in the new days that will open, let us hope that with the help of Ishwara we may see the opening of a new era of prosperity for all of us. If you follow as you have done in the past, patiently and righteously the path of truth, God's blessing will be on you. (Cheers.) There is another piece of good news, *i.e.*, that during the day 600 new members have joined the Union. (Cheers.)

On the morning of December 7th.

Almost all the Mill-hands, including hundreds of boys locked-out, assembled at the Union premises at 6-30 this morning to hear the result of the negotiations of their 18 representatives with the Mill authorities. Mr. Wadia also arrived at the premises early. In another half an hour the representatives having returned with the tidings that they had placed their three requests, *viz.*, that there should be no dismissal of any labourer, that payment should be made to the labourer for the days of the lock-out, and that no part of their gratuity funds should be forfeited and that the Mill authorities in reply said they wanted time to consider the demauds. This was announced to the meeting by Mr. Dandapani Pillay and the gathering dispersed to meet at 4 P. M.

On the evening of December 7th a meeting was held. Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech :—

This morning, as you are aware, 18 of your representatives, nine from each Mill, went to see the

authorities of the two Mills. They put forward three very modest requests. The first was that the pay for the days of lock-out must be given to the labourers. The second was that the gratuity fund should be restored to the weavers, which was cancelled a few days ago. The third was that the few people who were sent out under mere suspicion should be given back their places. These three requests have been refused by the Mill authorities, and they have preferred to continue with the lock-out and close the Mills. You will notice that these three requests revolved round the question of lock-out. From the notice that was issued yesterday we thought that the Mill authorities recognised their mistake that they could not visit the sins of the few upon thousands of labourers. They know, as well as we do, that the step they have taken of declaring the lock-out was a false and unreasonable step. They in their notice practically acknowledged that the lock-out with the specific object of finding out the culprits was a false move. But when we ask them to take the next right step of opening the Mills altogether, of giving the pay for lock-out days, of restoring their position to the people who have been unjustly thrown out, and not to use the very partial rule about the gratuity fund, they refused to comply with our modest requests. Under the circumstances we have to go on—I do not know for how long—as we have gone on during the last 10 days. But I am not at all despondent of the situation as it is this afternoon. Our appeal to the public of Madras is being responded to in an adequate manner. Also our other work is progressing slowly but steadily. The help that I want from you is that you should be very cautious

and very careful in all that you do during this time when you have little work on hand. Remember that we have to face a great financial strain, and while I am sure that we will succeed with all our efforts, I want your help as much as I can get it in meeting that strain. Therefore observe due and deliberate economy in all the money that you spend. As many of you as can get work here or elsewhere should accept it. Give us all the particulars that you can about your own conditions from time to time at the head-quarters of the Labour Union. As a last word I would ask you to keep up your courage and also your patience. I do not say that the work before us is easy. It is a very difficult struggle that faces us. But our cause is just and righteous, and victory is certain for us. (Cheers.) That victory will not only depend upon those who give us money from outside or other moral support from outside but that victory will ultimately rest on the way in which you carry your fight, and show your grit, pluck and courage. I depend for money on outsiders, but to me that is a little matter. The great matter to me is that I should be able to depend upon you. And therefore I would ask you to go on with your fight till victory is won. Remember that the victory must be won by you and by no one else.

The President then announced that the number of new members who joined the Union that day was 340, and continuing, said that the way in which the young boys behaved that morning was excellent and in consequence they desired to throw open the door of the Union to them, but as they were young they could not be made members, they would be called associates freed from any contribution. He agreed to the request of

some men that women who wished to become members should also be admitted.

On December 9th, 1918, a meeting of the labourers at the Union premises was held. Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech:—

The work that we have begun is progressing satisfactorily, more satisfactorily than I anticipated. Various letters from various parts of the Presidency have come conveying their sympathy with us and also money is steadily coming in. Some of those letters will be published in our *New India* paper from to-morrow. They will be published also in the Tamil paper *Desabhakthan* simultaneously. Another piece of good news is that we are going to have a public meeting of the citizens of Madras on Sunday next at Gokhale Hall where we will speak on your behalf to leaders who will assemble there. You will be glad to hear that at the meeting Mrs. Besant has consented to speak on your behalf. (Cheers.) I can assure you that her sympathies are with you in this great hour of your struggle and strife. That then is the next piece of news. Now I have to give you one particular piece of advice this afternoon and I hope you will bear that in mind in the days that lie in front when difficult work is to be done. I do not want you to give any opportunity whatever by your conduct in any manner to the Police of Madras to interfere with you. The Police Commissioner, Mr. Armitage has left us alone and we must see that not the least trouble of whatsoever character happens which will compel him to take steps against you. That is a point that I wish you to particularly bear in mind because it will have a very important bearing on what is going to take place. We have to

carry on a silent but constitutional struggle and we must see that we give no room whatever for any Police interference. Remember that our victory is sure and is only a question of time ; so that during the time that is at our disposal, when this great struggle is going on, we must see that we give no cause of complaint for any one.

Another point is this. If anyone speaks to you in the strain that you have created a strike, please explain to them that that is not correct. What happens is that the Mill authorities continue with their unjust and unjustifiable lock-out and for any distress that is caused, economic and social, the Mill authorities and they alone are wholly responsible. Remember that during the lock-out we are fighting for three great principles which your 18 representatives laid down when they went before the Mill authorities. We are going to stick to those three principles and therefore we must make it amply clear that we are suffering from a lock-out, unjust, unreasonable and uncalled for. Now all the things that the authorities of the Carnatic and Buckingham Mills have done are very common practices in questions of difficulty between labour and capital. In the early days of the labour struggle in England the division of labourers into classes was tried by capitalists as they are trying here between non-weavers and weavers. In England the labourers won against the tyranny of the English capitalists because the labourers refused to be divided and stood united in one solid body. And what the labourers won in England, you, I am sure, will win if you stand united. Similarly the device of taking away the gratuity money is not new and has

not been tried for the first time by the authorities of the Carnatic and Buckingham Mills.

I ask you again and again for patience so that we may have time to proceed with our plans and win the victory. The only thing, I repeat, that we want from you is to stand united, firm in your resolve till victory is won.

Before concluding he announced that 500 new members had joined that day and 100 extra women members.

On December 10th a meeting of the Labour Union at the Union premises was held. Mr. C. F. Andrews spoke to the labourers. Mr. Wadia presided and made the following speech:—

I have very great pleasure in bringing at to-day's meeting our great friend the friend of the poor of India, Mr. C. F. Andrews. He has the courage of our leader Mahatma Gandhi and has been with him a few days ago and brings to you a message from him. Mr. Andrews has great experience of all troubles regarding cooly matters, regarding the affairs of labourers, not only in this country but of elsewhere also. Therefore you will listen to him patiently and you will find for yourselves what good lesson he has to give you. There is one little matter of which I must speak to you. On coming here I understand that a few labourers have this morning gone to the Mills. Their number is very insignificant and they cannot be regarded in any manner as our friends. Everyone is responsible for his own actions and our business is to see that our own actions are clean and righteous. I should advise you, as I have done for so many days past, stand united, let

not your ranks be divided, and as long as you do that, success for you is certain in the end. I do not want you to lose heart. Our work is going on very well, money is coming in, in fact everything is smoothly going on and all that I require of you is a little patience, a united stand.

Concluding the proceedings Mr. Wadia said :—

You have heard the message that our friend has brought to us from Mahatma Gandhi. You have given to him the message that he takes from you to Mahatma Gandhi. And I want to add one more thing on your behalf, and I will ask our friend to carry that also to Mahatma Gandhi. It is this : that we will do here in this place in his absence as much as we possibly can to carry out his programme, his principles, his views of soul-force and of life. I will add this, that the struggle before us seems so hard and we are all so determined to win, that if need be as soon as he is well enough to come in our midst he should come to our help and our aid.

(At a further meeting of the Madras Labour Union on the December 13th, with Mr. Wadia, in the chair, a resolution embodying the terms of the labourers for a settlement was passed which the Union's 18 elected representatives would present to the Mill authorities that evening. This move on the part of the Union was in response to the message which Mr. Andrews brought from Messrs. Binny & Co., as a result of his intervention.)

Last afternoon we fully explained to you the terms on which we want to negotiate, having received a message through our friend, Mr. C. F. Andrews, from

Messrs. Binny & Co. Now those terms have been thoroughly discussed with your 18 representatives this afternoon by myself and by Mr. Andrews. From this you will see that the suffering you have undergone was worth undergoing. In the first place, our Madras Labour Union gets official recognition from Messrs. Binny & Co. The second point I would like you to bear in mind is that, when the Mills are opened on the terms that we are proposing, our friend, Mr. C. F. Andrews, will remain with us for six weeks. He will be staying in one of the cottages newly built by Messrs. Binny & Co., near the Mills. He will have access to the Mills any time of day or night. You will have access to his rooms any time of day or night. That being so, we must recognize the fact that we will be able to improve many things which at present need improvement in the two Mills. Therefore you must bear in mind that, while the Mills are opened on the terms that we are putting forward, there will be further improvement on account of the agreement which Messrs. Binny & Co. have come to with us, of having our friend, Mr. Andrews, examine everything. Now I am going to read to you the resolution which we have to pass here, which our 18 representatives take to-morrow morning to the Mills.

This meeting of the Madras Labour Union hereby appoints 18 members to come to an agreement with the Mill owners on the following terms:—

(i) Expression of regret for recent assault on Europeans and promise to do their utmost that this shall not happen again.

(ii) The promise on the part of the Manager that

he will do his utmost to promote good feeling and deal strictly and impartially with any cases of ill-treatment or harshness that are brought before him and proved to be true.

(iii) That, subject to the behaviour of labourers being found satisfactory, the Manager will restore the quarter-share of gratuity fund declared forfeited for 12 months from the day of workmen returning to work.

(iv) That the Mills will, if possible, resume work on 24 hours' notice being given of acceptance of the terms by this deputation.

(v) That the Managers undertake that there shall be no victimization.

These are the points with which our representatives will go to-morrow morning. There is something more on the remaining two points. But what I want you to understand is this—that in giving these terms we are doing I think a very true and right thing. As to the two other points, *viz.*, the pay of lock-out days and the reinstatement of workmen who have been dismissed, I have drawn up a separate resolution with the consent of our 18 representatives.

" That this meeting of the Madras Labour Union agrees not to claim in the above resolution pay for lock-out days or reinstatement of dismissed men, but hereby requests Mr. C. F. Andrews to do his utmost to intercede for them on the matter after the Mills have been opened." Now, I want you to carefully consider these resolutions in the light of all that has happened and I think you will come to the same conclusion that I have come to, that taking everything into consideration we have won a fair victory. I will tell you where that

victory lies. During the last few weeks the Mill authorities have thought it necessary to declare the two lock-outs. I need not tell you that those lock-outs were meant to bring us to a position where we may be forced to disband our Labour Union. Now the result of that is that instead of Labour Union being disbanded, Messrs. Binny and Co., recognze its constitution. That victory will enable us to carry on our work in future, to get other concessions and other improvements. That is then victory No. 1. I will come to the second great victory that we are gaining in this fight. You will remember in the notice of last Friday, Messrs. Binny and Co. tried to create disunity and separation between members of the Labour Union by saying that they would open other departments but the weaving shed was to remain closed. Now in the new terms that we are bringing about it is clear that our Labour Union members and all labourers of all departments having stood together will enter the Mills together. I will now come to victory No. 3. You will remember that some months ago there was a dispute between myself as President of the Madras Labour Union and Messrs. Binny and Co., regarding the treatment meeted out to labourers by its European officers. That time what looked like a defeat for us comes out to-day a victory for us, for the manager undertakes to promise that in future no ill-treatment will be given to labourers, that good treatment will be given to the labourers and that he will look into every case of ill-treatment when it comes before him. The third victory lies in the fact of admission on the part of Messrs. Binny and Co., that, in future at any rate, never mind what was in the past, no ill-treat-

ment shall be given to labourers. But above everything else, what satisfies me as the first result of the fight is that we are winning because we have stood united, that we are winning greater things when we take future things into account (cheers). What is more important is that in future the work of the M. L. U. will go forward with double strength and we will keep up all our activities in this, our head-quarters.

Now I would like to say one word about the victory we are winning. The victory does not belong to a few of us who have been working for you, neither to myself nor to my friends, Mr. Kalyanasundaram Mudaliar, Mr. E. L. Aiyar, Mr. Kamat, Mr. Sankara Aiyar, nor even to Mr. Andrews, but it belongs to you who have stood united like a stone wall by carrying out a good programme faithfully and well. I want you to remember, whether we are here or whether we are not here, your work must be carried on by you with self-respect to yourselves, dignity and independence in your character, and behaviour of men good and true, as you have proved yourselves to be in this lawfui struggle of many days. And so, my brothers, in bringing this struggle to a close, having done all we possibly could do, I wish you prosperity and success. But do not think that your struggle is altogether over. I wish success to your 18 representatives who go on behalf of the Madras Labour Union and we hope that the Mills will be opened next Monday.

LOCK-OUT TO CONTINUE

Struggle To Go On

The 18 Labour Union representatives met Sir Clement Simpson and other Mill officers in the morning.

Mr. C. F. Andrews and Mr. T. V. Kalyanasundaram Mudaliar were also present. The Mill authorities refused to accept the resolution of the Union requesting Mr. C. F. Andrews to intercede. The labourers returned but negotiations were going on.

END OF THE LOCK-OUT
LABOURS' VICTORY
Two out of Three Terms granted

THE men numbering over 9000 who met last evening at the Madras Labour Union premises received the glad tidings that Messrs. Binny and Co., Agents of the Carnatic and Buckingham Mills, have acceded to two out of the three conditions stipulated by the Union for the resumption of work on the reopening of the Mills. Mr. C. F. Andrews who had a busy time all the day in bringing about the settlement, in the absence of the President, Mr. B. P. Wadia, who had an engagement elsewhere and could not be present, announced that instead of submitting to the proposed arbitration, Sir C. Simpson, with the consent of the Directors, gave hope of a favourable consideration regarding the pay to the men for the days of the lock-out, at any rate for seven days as a matter of concession though not as a matter of right, and that he was not willing to take back the two dismissed men as their dismissal was not because of the assault but because of the neglect of duty as the assault had happened in their section of the Mills. Mr. Andrews said further that the part of gratuity fund would be paid to them at the end of the year conditional on their good conduct. He expressed his willingness to stay, if health permitted him, and live on the spot in order to be near the labourers and watch their conditions of

work and life. Sir C. Simpson was good enough to give him access to the Mills at any hour, and promised to consider any question Mr. Andrews might bring forward on behalf of the men. Mr. Andrews in conclusion said that the Directors had placed on record that they were considering the possibility of a law suit against the labour leaders. But he regarded this as not to be taken seriously. He was quite certain that the Mill owners would not take any such action. And if at any time such action was seriously considered, he himself would have to seriously consider whether the Labour Union should not have to declare themselves most strenuously against it and he would be ready to take the lead in such a matter. But it might be taken for granted, he added, that such action against their leaders in a Court of law would never be taken while the men worked harmoniously with their employers.

The Union agreed to the terms thus stated, and deputed Mr. Andrews to inform the Mill owners that they were ready to go to work at 6 o'clock next morning.

It is fully expected that they would do so and the lock-out might be considered at an end.

During this lock-out several important events took place. First: Taking advantage of the opening of the Tramwaymen's Union premises on December 5th Mr. Wadia made the following speech :—

MY BROTHERS,—We come from a function that was not so pleasing in its nature as the one in which we are engaged at this moment. You had your difficulties some months ago and after you faced them you are settling down in a new home. Your brothers

at Perambur are still going through difficulties, but I am sure, as with you, every thing will be all right with them also. When we are carrying on a struggle for truth, for justice and for righteousness difficulties arise, and we have to face those difficulties. And these difficulties must come because the great Devas and Rishis who guard human evolution naturally want to test strength of which we are made when we want to lead lives of truth, of justice and of righteousness. Now you have succeeded because you all stood united in the hour of trial and difficulty. (Hear, hear and cheers.) If our brothers at Perambur win success, it is also because they have and will stand united to the very end. Now that is the lesson that you have learnt and I hope and trust that you will not forget it, that you will remember it always. We are met together on a very happy occasion, we are coming into a new home and for us a new life is beginning. It would be better for us as we get this opportunity, that on this first occasion in this new home of ours, our very first act should be one of sympathy and co-operation with all our brothers. And therefore I would request you to take this opportunity and authorize us to carry a message of good-will, sympathy and co-operation from the Union of Tramway men to your brothers in difficulty at Perambur. I wish you in this new home of yours a very happy time and a very prosperous time, and may the Tramway Union do for us what the great Labour Unions in the western countries have done for their members, open a new era of peace, prosperity and plenty. Now I shall declare the Tramway Mens Union building open.

(Secondly, Messrs. Binny & Co. issued a manifesto

to which Mr. Wadia made a reply. The manifesto was published in the *Madras Mail* of 10th December, and Mr. Wadia's answer appeared in *New India* of December 15th.)

The following statement has been prepared by Messrs. Binny and Co., Ltd., Secretaries and Treasurers of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, in explanation of recent events and to place the facts as clearly as possible before the public. They attribute the labour unrest at the Mills to the unfortunate political situation in Southern India, to the Home Rule movement and to the anti-European sentiments propounded by the Labour Union leaders.

The following quotation is from *New India*, dated the 3rd July 1918 :—" Above all it should be remembered that the Labour Party of England will be able effectively to help us when it has a good vehicle of a sister movement here to work through. The fruition of the present Labour movement will be in the Home Rule administration, an administration, let us hope, of the near future."

From *New India*, dated the 15th July,—" If we get Home Rule all of us will be free men instead of slaves. Home Rule is a big problem, your labour troubles included in it are a part of that big problem. If we gain Home Rule all your labour troubles will be solved."

New India, 30th November, Speech by Swami Satya Deva :—" If you could fight with patience and endurance then the day will come when 30 crores of people will fight for Home Rule and be victorious."

The following appeared in an article in *New India* referring to this labour trouble on the 4th December :—

" Of course we assume that India is for Indians, and, therefore, that non-Indians *have no right to claim for themselves privileges equal to Indians*—not to speak of their demand to be treated as superior beings." [Italics not used in the original.]

Messrs. Binny and Co., quite appreciate the fact that Labour Unions have come to stay and would cordially meet more than half way a properly constituted Union of their work-people, but a Union such as the present one with representatives who know absolutely nothing of labour conditions in Madras, or over the rest of India and whose primary object is politics, can serve no useful purpose as regards either employees or employers, and, as has been proved already, is causing untold mischief, misunderstanding and needless suffering.

They preface their remarks by saying that there has been no dispute in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills of any kind since the year 1903, that is to say, for fifteen consecutive years the management and the work-people have been working quietly together. During these fifteen years many changes have been made in the conditions of the work-people, and all of these changes were for their benefit and intended to improve their status and their relations with their employers.

They trace the present deplorable situation to the end of December 1917, and the beginning of January 1918, when references were made to these Mills by Dewan Bahadur P. Kesava Pillay. To do Mr. Kesava Pillay justice, he included in his indictment the Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills under Indian management; and at a later date when summarizing a comparison of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills with the Indian-

managed Mills, he handsomely showed that the comparison was greatly to the advantage of the two former. Mr. Kesava Pillay, however, overlooked the fact that the working hours of the Mills in Madras as in other parts of India are governed by a Factory Act. All the Mills in India must conform approximately to the same working hours, or Mills that worked for shorter hours would suffer by unfair competition. Apparently as a result of Mr. Kesava Pillay's remarks, a Labour Union was formed, and it has held meetings more or less continuously throughout 1918. At these meetings speakers in the vernacular have informed the work-people that they are treated worse than beasts of burden, like rats, etc., and have thereby made them restless and discontented.

It has further been continuously dinned into the ears of the workmen at these meetings that they are unfairly and unjustly treated, and though it is cleverly added that they should not strike, the workmen can only conclude that they are down-trodden and that the only effective weapon they possess is to strike.

All this time the only serious complaints that have been placed before the management have been with reference to the length of the hours of work. These hours, though longer than those of the Perambur Loco. Works and Machine Shops in this city, are shorter than the working hours current in Cotton Mills in India.

To illustrate the fact that wages are sufficient it is pointed out that the supply of labour is ample and that the Mills have hitherto been able to engage all they require at the gates without special recruitment.

At the meeting reported in *New India* of the 29th

April 1918, Mr. Wadia and several others were appointed, more or less by themselves, as principals of the Labour Union, and at this meeting Mr. Wadia announced to the work-people that "a variety of Madras leaders who will explain to you the various political, social and economic problems which touch you intimately . . . ." It will be noticed that politics come first.

In June the attention of the Madras Government was drawn to this movement, and at the instance of H. E. the Governor, who happened to be in Madras at the time, and with a view to promoting an understanding in the interests of all concerned and in order that the conditions at the Mills should be fully understood by Mr. Wadia, an interview was arranged between Mr. Wadia and Mr. Symonds of Messrs. Binny and Co., Ltd. Mr. Symonds explained to Mr. Wadia the increased wages that had been granted for many years previous to and since the outbreak of War, and showed him the social welfare work that was being carried on. Mr. Wadia expressed himself thoroughly satisfied at the time, and there was a temporary cessation of meetings. Later Mr. Wadia ignoring the existence of the Factory Act already referred to and the sympathetic interpretation of many clauses of it by the management, promulgated certain demands purporting to be on behalf of the work-people, and there followed a number of meetings, in one of which Mr. Wadia defamed Mr. Symonds and the European Assistants. For this, on legal proceedings being threatened, he publicly apologized. In August there followed the strike of the cotton workers in the Madura Mills. In

September the Tramway Strike took place, apparently conducted by the Tramway Union.

In October, the weavers of the Buckingham Mills refused to start work before 6-30 A.M. The working hours have been the same for many years, and there was no lengthening of hours as has been alleged. On the contrary they had recently been slightly shortened, forty minutes being allowed for dinner in the middle of the day instead of the thirty minutes required by the Factory Act. This refusal to attend work at 6 A.M. could very easily have been treated by the management as a strike, but they were most anxious, as they felt the work-people were being misguided by the Union, that they should suffer as little as possible by the duration of the stoppage or by forfeiture of their Gratuity Funds. These funds are provided by the Companies without contribution by the workmen, in order to make some provision to enable them to retire to their villages after ten years' satisfactory consecutive service if they desire to do so. This lock-out only lasted three days, and work was apparently amicably resumed, the work-people attending punctually at the prescribed hour, 6 A.M.

As the result of this first lock-out a good deal of abuse was hurled at the management, and a good many misstatements were made. Amongst others, it was stated that the selling price of rice which the management supplied to the work-people had been raised. It is perfectly true that when the Companies first commenced supplying the rice they did so at 4½ and then 4 measures to the rupee, but, as we all know, the price of rice rose rapidly. Further, the Mill authorities found that the cheaper rice was being sold to outsiders

nstead of being utilized by the work-people themselves. A ration system therefore, was introduced, by which each adult could purchase, once a week, $3\frac{1}{2}$ measures of rice for a rupee, and half-timers half this quantity.

In the same way it has been stated that the price of cloth sold to the work-people was raised. This is also correct, and for the same reason, the management found that the work-people were buying cloth of the kind they do not themselves wear, and that the cloth was being re-sold to the bazaars, and even small shops on the Mount Road. The price was then raised to the current wholesale market price and the quantity limited. The recent fall in the market price has incidentally led to a fall in the price of the cloth supplied to the work-people.

At no time have the work-people received less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ measures of rice for the rupee or been charged more than the wholesale market price for the cloth sold to them.

Further, in November, in the week before the assaults took place, one day's pay, an English dhoti and four measures of rice to each man (two measures to each boy) were given free in recognition of the Armistice.

We now come to the immediate trouble. On Monday, the 25th November, the Weaving Master of the Carnatic Mill was assaulted in the weaving shed, by shuttles being thrown at him from behind. The suspension of a jobber followed, and on Wednesday, the 27th, the weavers at the Carnatic Mill refused to work unless this man was reinstated. On the same Wednesday morning at 6 A.M. a premeditated attack from the

fire-escape door of the weaving shed was made on the Manager of the Buckingham Mill. Immediately he passed the door about 50 or 60 weavers threw stones at him from behind. Another European officer who saw the whole incident and tried to hold one of the men, was then set upon. The weavers of both Mills refused to give up the names of the assailants, neither did they render any assistance. The Mills were accordingly again shut down, with very great reluctance, as it was impossible to ignore the significance of these two attacks. On the 6th December a notice was put up, offering the weavers an opportunity of expressing regret. The notice is as follows:—

NOTICE

Saturday, 7th December, 1918.

" The Mill, except the Weaving Department, will run from 6 A.M. till 12 and a full day's pay will be allowed. Wages will be paid from 12 to 1 P.M.

The weaving shed will remain closed. Those working in the Weaving Department who are desirous of expressing regret for recent misconduct and who are prepared to signify their willingness to resume work and obey orders may register their names between 7 A.M. and 9 A.M. By doing so they may enable the Manager to decide on a date for reopening the Mill.

The weavers will be paid on the regular pay day for this department, namely, Saturday the 14th December."

Instead of an expression of regret being made in response to this overture, a deputation was sent to make the following three demands from the Management :—

(1) That the weaving jobbers recently dismissed should be reinstated.

(2) That the forfeiture of one-fourth of the amount standing in the name of each weaver in the Gratuity Fund should be cancelled.

(3) That full wages should be paid for the time the Mills were stopped.

These demands could clearly not be complied with, and with the advice of the Union leaders the remainder joined in the issue with the weavers, and so the lock-out has become a strike.

It will be observed that no grievances or complaints are mentioned, and the demands relate solely to the disciplinary measures arising from the assaults.

Although the labour conditions in the Mills are admitted to be as good as any in India and although far more has been done by the Management for their workmen than has been done elsewhere or in Indian-owned Mills, the Union would appear to have been deliberately formed to organize labour here with a view to trying to make the Mill hands believe that Home Rule will improve their lot.

The introduction of political and racial questions into the delicate and complicated relations that everywhere exist between Capital and Labour is greatly to be deplored, and it is to be hoped that in the interests of industry some means will be found of preventing the methods that have found favour in Madras from spreading to other parts of industrial India.

WORK OF THE LABOUR UNION

Heroism of the Sufferers

Messrs. Binny & Co., have at length thought it necessary to issue an explanation of the sad situation created by their unreasonable and unjust action, which

locked out thousands of honest and good labourers and threw them on the streets to starve.

On behalf of the Madras Labour Union as its President, it is necessary that I should answer Messrs. Binny & Co.'s half truths and statements which withont proper comment throw a slur on the excellent work done by the Union.

Messrs. Binny & Co. begin by quoting a few passages from *New India* to show that the Madras Labour movement is enveloped by politics. I do not know what Messrs. Binny & Co. wish to imply by their quotations but it would clear the ground if I briefly say that this work began when a few ill-treated labourers came to me with sundry grievances. I did not go to them; I did not seek them. They came to me, and on due enquiry I could find only one thing which I could immediately test, the incovenience and hardship which the labourers had to put up with because the midday recess time was only 30 minutes. I went to the sheds without any labourers, more than once, and watched the hurry, etc., attending the coming out, the taking of food, the returning to the Mills and was convinced that that was a real grievance. Then I collected other facts—tales of ill-treatment by European Officers, inadequate wages, etc., and after some consideration decided to go to a meeting and form a Labour Union. In doing so, I quite saw the opportunity of attaining more than one object. I classified them in mind: (1) the tension on the labourers to be removed by attention to their immediate grievances, (2) the education of the labourers along healthy constitutional lines, in matters sociological; (3) the possibility of producing a factor, to be discussed, in

relation to the widening of the Franchise in the immediate future (the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was not out, but I knew the direction in which the political wind was blowing); (4) the bringing out of the virtues of self-reliance and self-respect inherent in the labourer.

Why not Politics

Of these four, the first and the last appealed to me the most, for they were directly touching, now and here, the labourers. What was necessary was to make a movement for unity among them, and this required an organization. Thus it was not for political *exploitation* that this work was taken in hand; if Messrs. Binny & Co., are implying *exploitation of labour for political ends*, they are wrong. It will be seen that out of the above four considerations I selected the first and the fourth; my weekly speeches to the Labour Union prove this. Why should Messrs. Binny & Co. object to a a politician taking up this question? Are not Labour Leaders politicians in Great Britain? Home Rulers are blamed by Anglo-Indians, officials and non-officials, for being regardless of the masses; when a Home Ruler endeavours to work for a portion of the masses, he is objected to for his "primary object is politics." But take this for granted, though it is not a fact, why should not I, or any other Home Ruler, make an effort to educate politically the labourers of Madras? I have not done it, because the work I set out to do is not accomplished, but the moment the local grievances of labourers are removed, I do not see why I should not try to educate them politically.

Why should not Labour in India be made vocal so that it can agitate against the existing Factory Act

and gain for itself reduction in working hours, and do sundry other things. No one represents or speaks out for Labour now. Capitalists, Europeans and Indians alike, exploit labour and we must put a stop to this. The Labour problem is one problem of the masses. Now mass movements of a political nature have to begin sometime in India, and somebody has to tackle the problem. I think the time has come to make a start, and why should I not be that somebody?

I have frankly and honestly stated why I started the Labour Union; but what has that to do with Messrs. Binny & Co., Lock-cuts? The question at issue at this moment is "why this lock-out? Why this trouble in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills?"

AN HALF TRUTH AND THE REAL TRUTH

The Manifesto of Messrs. Binny & Co. refers to Lord Pentland's kind interference, and my discussions with their Mr. Symonds. It is said that "there was a temporary cessation of meetings." Messrs. Binny & Co. ought to have told the whole truth. After my discussions with Mr. Symonds, I wrote to him a letter on 30th May. 1918. detailing some of the grievances and here is the closing paragraph of my letter :—

"There are other points, but they may be left over just for the present. If you can see your way to meet the labourers on the above items, it would facilitate matters considerably. I am prepared to discontinue the meetings while you and Sir Clement Simpson are considering this letter. The labourers will not approve of this, I fear, but I am eager to do all I can to meet your wishes. I request you to consider the matter and let me have an answer to this as early as convenient.

The meetings were discontinued, and on 28th June, full one month after my letter, I wrote to Mr. Moir, Private Secretary to H.E. Lord Pentland :

28th June, 1918.

DEAR MR. MOIR,

I forwarded to you for His Excellency's perusal my letter to Mr. A. P. Symonds of Messrs. Binny & Co., dated 30th May, 1918. Will you please inform His Excellency that Mr. Symonds has not replied to my letter, and has not even shown the courtesy of acknowledging it. One full month has elapsed and my promise has been kept; for, during the period I have not addressed a single meeting of the labourers at Perambur. In fact no meetings have been held and the labourers have spent their Saturday afternoons at semi-religious Harikatha performances. It was with some difficulty that I have been able to persuade the labourers to go without regulated meetings. They have found some relief by our regulated sale of food-stuffs. As advised by His Excellency, I have tried my best to co-operate with Mr. Symonds, but I regret I have not been helped in any way. I deem it necessary to bring this fact to the notice of His Excellency.

Sincerely yours,

B. P. WADIA.

T. E. MOIR, ESQ., I.C.S.,

Private Secretary to H.E. the Governor of Madras,

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, OOTACAMUND.

In answer to this I received the following :

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,

31—6—'18.

DEAR MR. WADIA,

I write to acknowledge your letter of 28th June, which I shall place before His Excellency, who will, I have no doubt, glad to hear that at this time the meetings have been suspended even temporarily.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) T. E. MOIR.

At length on 13th July, finding all efforts to meet Messrs. Binny & Co. unresponded to, I recommended the Labour Union meetings.

THE REAL CAUSE OF THE LOCK-OUT

But let me come to the immediate cause of the Lock-outs. I think, it is necessary, to write very clearly on the issue. Messrs. Binny & Co.'s manifesto speaks of several details, accurate and otherwise, but no mention is made of the central fact, directly or indirectly. I do not think Messrs. Binny & Co. are unaware of it. The *reason d'etre* of their hostility, manifested in the two Lock-outs, is clear; they want to disband our Labour Union. It is with great pleasure that I see their manifesto declaring that they "appreciate the fact that Labour Unions have come to stay." They, however, object to the existing Union: is it because the teaching given at our meetings tends to make Labourers independent and self-respecting and enable them to give up their old ways of slavishly putting up with everything including ill-treatment? If the Union is making our members politically vociferous or troublesome let the Government look after that: why should Messrs. Binny & Co. get nervous? The fact is that the new spirit has touched the labourers; just as peasants will not silently die of hunger in famine time

as in the days gone by, so also the labourers, in Madras and elsewhere, will not, with folded hands, slavishly accept any kind of ill-treatment. Let Messrs. Binny & Co. realize that those days are gone, never to return. Messrs. Binny & Co. "would cordially meet more than half way a properly constituted Union"—but who is to decide the propriety of the constitution? Imagine Mr. Lloyd George telling Mr. Henderson, "I will cordially meet a properly constituted Union not headed by politicians." It is for the labourers to say who should be their leaders, and what shall be the constitution of their Union; it is not for Messrs. Binny & Co. to dictate.

I submit that the two recent Lock-outs somehow produce the impression that they are meant to bring the labourers to a position where they may find it necessary to disavow the Labour Union and compel its dissolution. Personally I am detached; if the labourers are weak and take that course, I have no objection; they will have to pay the price of such a disastrous course. As long as I am at the head of it, my advice will always be what it has been—"Be united, self-respected and do not tolerate insults of words or blows from employers, be they European or be they Indian, and demand courteously what you think to be right." My method has been one of compromise to bring about a harmonious and amicable settlement. I did it at the Choolai Mills, with the help of the Indian employers to the satisfaction of both parties. If Mr. Symonds had allowed me, I would have done the same for his Mills and there would have been no trouble. My letter to him, dated 30th May was polite, and if he thought my requests were not reasonable he would

have discussed them with me; he chose the course of not acknowledging the letter and allowed things to drift. The first Lock-out, a few weeks ago, was unjust, but the men went to the Mills because I requested them to do so. I did so because I do not believe in strikes and want to avoid them as much as I can. The result of that was reports from labourers of worse treatment which seem to have provoked some to resort to assault, and while I blame those who are guilty of the reported assaults I cannot help conjecturing that they might have been led into hasty action under provocation. I do not believe that there has been any *organized* attempt at rioting or assaulting; on the other hand the misdeed was done on the spur of the moment.

EUROPEAN OFFICERS

There is little doubt that the European officers of the Mills have not been straight in their treatment of labourers. Let me give two definite instances.

I. Mr. Alfred Alexander, Manager of Buckingham Mills admits in his application number 9362 of 1918 in the Pr esidency Magistrate's Court, Egmore: "As the complainant was leaving the department, he wilfully stopped and looked round presumably to see if others were following.

It was then I turned his head and pushed him along but not with force."

II. Mr. F. S. Southworth was charged with showing temper, abusing and saying "shut up, you bloody swine," and giving a blow with his fist on the left side of the complainant's stomach. This complaint was filed on 30th August in the Court of Mr. Bower. Mr. Southworth tendered the following apology to the labourer.

Madras, 2nd Oct. 1918.

Mr. Sugundapuri Mudaliar,

Madras.

With reference to your complaint against me in the Egmore Police Court, I regret what happended on the occasion and I assure you that such a thing will not happen again.

(Sd.) J. SOUTHWORTH.

Messrs. Binny & Co.'s European Officers seem to forget that the above cast a slur on their conduct. Mr. Alexander admits pushing a man and "turning his head" (I would like friends to picture the situation); Mr. Southworth apologizes and promises not to do again what was complained against—abusive words and a blow with the fist. I want to ask Sir Clement Simpson if he considers this kind of behaviour of Messrs. Alexander and Southworth quite gentlemanly?

PROVOCATION

Let me print another statement and ask Sir Clement —I name him because many labourers have spoken highly of his courteous and gentlemanly manner—if he does not think that illiterate labourers would be provoked if constantly goaded in the manner indicated in the statement.

To Mr. B. P. Wadia, President, Madras Labour Union, Madras.

Sir,—We, the Mill hands of the Carnatic and Buckingham Mills, beg to bring the following facts:—

The European officers of the above Mills ill-treated us in every possible way. Whenever we ask them oil and other necessary things for work, they say: "Go to Wadia, he will give you oil and all other things you want."

In rainy season, we go there completely wet, and

used to dry the wet clothes inside the Mills. Now the officers, as soon as they see the clothes hanging, tear it to pieces.

I have heard innumerable stories of provocation and I have no reason to disbelieve them altogether. I have always taken into account the factor of exaggeration, though invariably I have found the labourers accurate and cautious in their statements which I had occasion to verify.

The Gratuity Fund

The Gratuity Fund deserves a word: I do not for one moment doubt the *bona fides* of Messrs. Binny & Co., but the way in which they have grabbed the money as per their recent notice leaves a bad taste in the mouth. Do they look upon this Fund in the light of insurance against strikes? If so, are we not justified in looking upon their various institutions of beneficence as insurance against self-respect, independence and dignity which the labourers might display? In a speech I delivered on the 13th of July I said:

"What is the use of recreation grounds and night-schools and museums when men's self-respect, is killed and they are desired not to show it? What is the good of educative and pleasure-giving institutions when the very soul of the labourer is crushed, when he has no time from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M."

What is the use of the Gratuity Fund if it is to be a strike-insurance? Is that the way Messrs. Binny & Co. would give Economic freedom to their men? Do they think that English Labour would tolerate such a course for one hour?

Labourers do not want attractive toys when their stomachs are empty, their limbs are weary, their spirits are crushed. The labourers have fully realized the situation, and whatever may happen in the future they will refuse to be cowed down to lie silently, or work like slaves. The new spirit has touched the labourers and our Union has attained that much.

No one has regretted the assaults more than myself. Twice in formal resolutions and more than that informally regret has been expressed. I would hand over the culprit if I knew them ; I have done my best to trace them and I make bold to say that they are not among our Labour Union members.

Our Cause

The cause of the labourers is just and righteous. They have been badly treated. They have shown of what excellent stuff they are made. With Famine staring us in the face, with economic distress surrounding us, for over a fortnight these labourers have behaved like sportsmen, and I do not know of one deed of theirs for which I, as their associate, need be ashamed. Look into their eyes, observe their faces, watch how they suffer and endure, and you will learn that the Madras Labour Union members are heroes, to serve whom is a delight. I wish some Madras leaders would come and see for themselves what Mr. C. F. Andrews has seen at our head-quarters at Perambur and then they will agree that there must be something wrong with the management of the two Mills, which, in the space of a few weeks, had to have recourse to two Lock-outs, the second of which is engendering, suffering and threatening us with serious developments in our city. The situation is

very critical and I appeal to my countrymen to help.

B. P. WADIA.

Thirdly: The Labour Employment Bureau was opened, the following notice of which appeared in the papers of December 12th.

THE LABOUR EMPLOYMENT BUREAU

ITS USEFULNESS TO THE PUBLIC

Last week Mr. Wadia announced at the Labour Union meeting that a Labour Employment Bureau has been established with a view to find employment for all those labourers, skilled or unskilled, who have been turned out of employment and are members of the various Labour Unions in the city. While such a Bureau is essential as a subsidiary activity of the Unions, its usefulness to the public was not explained at the time. Its organization is perhaps more welcome to the general public than to the Union members. The scarcity of labour, specially skilled, has been keenly felt by many employers for some years past, and it has been steadily growing specially in the outlying towns. For business employing machinery, the task of obtaining trained recruits had been extremely difficult, and to all such employers and organizers, this Employment Bureau must be a veritable God-send.

PLENTY OF SKILLED LABOUR

Under present circumstances, the Bureau can supply hundreds of skilled labourers for any kind of specialized work. Employers desirous of having them must apply early because several labourers in spite of their excellent training to handle machinery are returning to their villages for want of employment here. From the patriotic stand-point too, it is essential to prevent such an

exodus; for, the number of skilled artisans being small, we must make the best use of all those available. The labourers whom the Bureau can find belong to various trades, carpenters, blacksmiths, drivers, fitters, builders, mechanics, weavers, sizers, electricians—all these can be supplied in abundance. Several of these have been in such vocations for a number of years, so that their skill is of no mean order. The bulk of them have been leading a steady life, sticking to any one employer for a number of years, which additional qualification must add to their popularity.

ATTENDERS AND PEONS

There is at present a great dearth in the city of attenders with a fair knowledge of English. The Employment Bureau can meet an immediate demand for scores of such youths. A still larger number is available for the duties of the peon, persons of established usefulness by steady and honest work.

It is the patriotic duty of every Indian to patronize the Bureau to the best of his capacity. These trained workmen are almost on the verge of starvation, and that for no fault of theirs. If we find them employment, we shall be saving a number of families from want, and at the same time assist the cause for which the Labour Union stands—a decent, self-respecting life for our poorer countrymen. Assistance in finding employment will be welcome from all parts of India. The wages asked for are very moderate, and employers are sure to find these recruits a welcome addition from all standpoints. All correspondence on this subject is to be addressed to:

M. N. SANKARA IYER,
Labour Union Office.

Fourthly a public meeting of the citizens of Madras was held at the Gokhale Hall on Dec. 15th to sympathise with the labourers locked-out. Mrs. Annie Besant presided. Mr. Wadia made the following speech :—

After waiting for over a fortnight some of us who have been trying to help the labourers at Perambore have thought it fit to convene a public meeting of the citizens of Madras. I want to put to you first the broad and most important issue on which this great struggle is being carried on. I shall tell you frankly at the very outset that the great factors which dominated both sides now taking part in this struggle is whether Indian labourers or Indian capitalists will succeed in the first struggle between Labour and Capital in India. It has little to do with stocks, it has little to do with hours, it has little to do with wages, it has little to do even with the ill-treatment that is reported to be given to the labourers by the employers, but the central fact is this—that when labour has been for the first time organised in India, the capitalists who in this particular instance happen to be foreigners are fighting a hard strenuous fight, and in a way I am glad that the fight has been strenuous. As Mrs. Besant pointed out to you, our Labour Union is young, our funds are scanty, but in the course of six or seven months with the help of our weekly meetings we have accumulated a moral force which is so powerful that it has been a surprise, I am certain, to Sir Clement Simpson and his assistant. Gentlemen, the fight therefore lies on the moral principle. So far Indian labour has been intimidated, cowed down and at our Labour Union meetings the first thing I and my colleagues did was to instill self-respect in the hearts and heads of the

labourers. A good instance of what we did, I will give you, which took place yesterday afternoon. When the first trouble arose, between the labourers and the Mill authorities some time ago and when a number of people came to see me in my office, it was impossible for me to see them in my room. I asked a few people to see me and talk the matter over with meat Adyar, and they were somewhat surprised when chairs were offered to every single one of them. That was the treatment that we who are conducting the Labour Union gave the labourers and they had a reception yesterday which made them remember it. Eighteen representatives of the Madras Labour Union went because they were requested to go with the help of Mr. Andrews when the European staff headed by Sir Clement Simpson were seated in chairs.

Mr. C. F. Andrews observed that through the whole of the interview all parties were standing.

The labourers complained that the treatment meted out to them yesterday was very different from that given by the leaders of the Labour Union. It was a manifestation of self-respect on the part of the labourers and they refused any more to take ill-treatment, abuse or blows of any kind whatsoever lying down. That is as it should be. That is the main issue. Because they want to disband the Labour Union they tried various methods into details of which I do not want to go as the matter is under discussion. But step by step we have proceeded and we have come to a position where men, yesterday afternoon, after consultation with me and among themselves, have come to the resolution that they will not go to the Mills unless Messrs. Binny

& Co., accepted arbitration. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, it is very well to cheer, but what am I and my colleagues going to do? This is the 19th day of the Lock-out. Thousands of labourers are starving. By careful computation, I find that 45,000 or 50,000 people, men, women and children, are all starving at Perambore and round about. The struggle has been heroic and I am proud of my men who have, without a murmur, without showing a sign of impatience, behaved like sportsmen and gentlemen. (Cheers.) Several friends have asked me during the last two or three days how many rupees I have so far spent in feeding these poor. So far the labourers have not come for a single pie. (Cheers.) Out of their own earnings, living economically, giving up liquor, etc., they are carrying a struggle of which as an Indian I am very greatly proud. (Hear, hear and applause.) The spirit which they have shown is admirable; but however economically you may live, your purse is going to be exhausted and these illiterate, uneducated people have with careful computation arrived at a date and they will pull on so long. I asked them what after that they have to say supposing friends do not come in and the Indian public do not make an adequate response. They said "We will go back to our villages; we will die; but in the struggle we will not give way where the principle of righteousness is involved. (Cheers.) They have said their say and I want you friends to have your say." Cheering will not do. I have gone there day after day, sometimes early in the morning and I know that starvation is already upon them. We want your help. Reference was made by the previous speakers to

the women members of the labour families grumbling. But let me pay my little tribute to them also. For when it was explained to them by some of my agents, in one day a hundred women members of various labour families joined the Labour Union. (Cheers.) Patiently, day after day, they have listened to the words of advice. Very great fears were expressed by certain friends because of the economic distress that is already prevailing in the city. I am confident of one thing that unless something unforeseen happens at Perambore where these men are living will be the last place where looting will take place. Some weeks ago when there was looting in Madras I am proud to say our Labour Union shops were not looted, our Labour Union men were not found looting anywhere. During these 19 days I have been very carefully watching; not one man who has been found drunk. (Cheers.) That is the kind of fight that my associates are carrying on and in which they require your help. I am not going to announce the funds for obvious reasons, but I assure you that every pie received will be carefully applied to the redress of the grievances of the people and when the struggle is over we shall publish accounts and show their disposal. Mr. Andrews told you what English students did there. Here students are prohibited from entering into active political discussions but in social welfare work of their brethren they may be allowed to go from place to place and collect money, and that is what we are going to do and we shall organise on Monday at 5-15 P. M. at the Home Rule League head-quarters at Broadway, a small meeting of young friends who want to help us and be volunteers going from place to place

collecting donations. The affair of collecting is very difficult and it has been taken over by my friend Mr. E. L. Aiyar. We have divided work at the Labour Union. My young friend Mr. Sankara Aiyar is there at the Employment Bureau. We have been able to drift elsewhere where Messrs. Binny & Co.'s influence does not enter ; nearly two thousand men have returned to their villages. We are trying as much as we can to minimise the economic distress and we have reached the point and cannot go any further. We have said our last say. We want justice and while you are arbitrating our men will go to the Mills. It remains for Sir C. Simpson to accept the arbitration. If labour succeeds it is a great advance that Indian labour will have made in this country, for once established the principle of arbitration and the difficulties will solve themselves in a harmonious fashion. At the present moment Mr. Andrews said there is war, a war where unfortunately or fortunately I do not know, human bodies are not killed, but human bodies are starving and not only male bodies but women and most pathetic and unfortunte, the children are starving. You can understand the spirit at Perambore when I tell you that when I go there in the afternoon and sometimes in the morning, children begin to notice the motor car which comes with the helpers of their fathers and brothers and they shout my name or some one else's name reminding us that they are starving. The other day I came across the case of a boy. It was the morning before Mr. Andrews arrived on the scene. There was a boy and he was there very early and he was feeling hungry. He told me that he had very little to eat the whole of the previous day. It was about 8-30

that morning and he had not had a morsel. Grant for one moment that the labourers are wrong and Messrs. Binny & Co. are right, which they are not, but it seems to me our duty as Indians is to stand by our brothers, and help the labourers who have shown the spirit of unity and for 19 long weary days have stood like heroes in the great struggle. If the Indian nation is composed of such men we need not be afraid of our future.

Fifthly the following relief measures were announced by Mr. Wadia: on December 19th :—

I am glad to be able to announce the following two measures of relief to the members of the Madras Labour Union towards the alleviation of their sufferings caused by recent events:

Beginning with next Sunday, rice will be sold to members at $3\frac{1}{2}$ measures full. So far good country rice had been sold at our store at $3\frac{1}{8}$ measures and the price is now lowered to $3\frac{1}{2}$ measures per rupee for rice equally good and healthy. Every member will, as at present, be enabled to buy rice up to three rupees on every Sunday for four weeks. The expenses towards this will be met from the Relief Fund.

Secondly, it has been represented to me that members of the Union are compelled to borrow small amounts of money at extortionate rates of interest amounting often to two annas per month per rupee. I have arranged with the Royapetta Bank Ltd. to open a branch at Choolai for the benefit of the members of the Union, and loans will be given at a rate of interest not exceeding two pies per rupee. Rules governing these loans are being drawn up now, and the Union

branch of the Bank will be conducted with the advice of a Committee in which all the three Mills will be adequately represented. The Bank will be useful to members of the Union in many other ways as well, such as in enabling them to make monthly deposits under favourable terms.

Announcements as to other relief measures will be made later on from time to time.

After tiding over the recent troubles the Madras Labour Union resumed its weekly meetings on December 21st and held its 21st meeting at the Union premises with the President Mr. B. P. Wadia in the chair. The President explained the relief of measures taken on hand and proposed to be taken. Mr. Andrews spoke on the necessity of reducing the working hours of the labourers. Mr. Wadia said:

After the recent troubles which have been settled we meet for the first time for our weekly Saturday meetings. Since the troubles have been over some of us have been busy planning ways and means of relief to our people who have suffered for so many days. You must have already noticed that I have issued a press circular giving details of the two measures of relief which I think to be important. The first is an experiment which we will make to-morrow and if you would need it we will continue it. Instead of selling rice to you at $3\frac{1}{8}$ measures which is the rate prevailing in the market, we will sell you at the rate of $3\frac{1}{2}$ measures taking part of the money from the Relief Fund which we have been collecting. The second is this: I hear that you borrow money from various people at a very high rate of interest. To prevent your losing so much I have thought

it necessary to arrange for opening a bank from which you will borrow money at a reasonable rate of interest. The third is not yet fully matured but it will come into existence very soon. I am trying to open in this place an Ayurvedic Dispensary. Now for the purpose of running our bank very smoothly it is necessary that a Committee of 9 or 10 among you should be formed. Therefore I want you after the speeches are over with the help of Mr. Kalyanasundaram Mudaliar and Mr. Kamath to go into the question of electing a Committee of 10 or 12, whom you must implicitly trust and to whom we may go for advice, and money will be lent to you. That is all the informatiom so far as the relief work is concerned that I have to give you. I have one more word of advice to offer to you and it is this. With the difficulties which we have overcome now a new era opens out before you as labourers engaged in work in one or another of the big factories at Perambore or Choolai. I have asked you repeatedly in the past to take care of the good name of the Union. That advice was given to you when the name of the Union was small; to-day the name of the Union is somewhat great and therefore your responsibility to maintain that good name has also increased. The fact has gone round the country that the labourers in the Mills in suffering have shown a splendid example of courage, of tact, of patience and quiet waiting; that good name also for yourselves has to be maintained. Therefore both your own name and the name of the Union is in your good keeping. I appeal to you not to do anything in word or in deed which will go to spoil the good name of the Union as well as your own

good name. Keep calm, united, bring all that you have to say to our Labour Union head-quarters where Mr. Andrews stays, but do not do anything on your own responsibility without consulting your leaders and also your fellow-workers. All the troubles and difficulties that you have are being attended to by us one by one. There seems to be some trouble about $\frac{1}{4}$ gratuity fund, but that question Mr. Andrews and myself will settle with the men amicably and well. Similarly I know I have heard from several of you about the case of the dismissed man, our friend Aziz Khan. His case is before us and we have not forgotten it. The necessary action will be taken on that point also. I should therefore advise you to go on with your daily work in cheerful good spirits and if there is any difficulty, come to Mr. Andrews and report whatever you have to say to him.

The first anniversary of the Madras Labour Union was celebrated on Sunday April 14, 1919, when Mr. Wadia spoke as follows:—

You have heard from the various speakers some views and sentiments which have been permeating our work at this particular place. One year ago it was that we started in a very informal manner the work which we have carried on for twelve months and not without successful results. There are two ways in which I would like to examine our activities and the fruits of those labours. The first is to examine our work in light of the gain that has occurred to us in the shape of increase of wages or decrease of working hours. If we look at our work and examine it in that particular way I am sure you will agree with me that we have made some solid progress.

Moral Progress

We have had some difficult and anxious times during the past year, and if they have come to a successful close, it is entirely due to the great tact and perseverance which you have displayed. (Cheers.) I know some words of extravagant praise have been spoken about me but let me here put on record that nothing of that work would have been possible but for the hearty co-operation and continuous work of the members of the Labour Union. I must also put on record the great help and co-operation which the proprietors of the Choolai Mills have rendered me on two occasions and have thereby avoided a strike or a lock-out. That is one point of view from which we may judge our activities. But to me that particular point is of less importance. The point which I value most is the result that has come to us in the shape of moral progress which we have been able to show during the year that is just closing. We do not remain content altogether with a mere increase of wages or a shortening of hours of work, but our life is to be guided by something that is more abiding, something that is more lasting which comes to us with the widening of our mental horizon and with the deepening of our spiritual perceptions. During the year in the midst of very difficult circumstances you have shown moral pluck, moral grit that is of immense value not to your individual selves but to the country as a whole. Do you remember the anxious time that we have had in this very place when the Carnatic and Buckingham Mills declared a lock-out and day after day we met here to concert measures and to find out ways and means whereby we might in a spiritual manner carry on the struggle that came to us then ?

The Noble Cry

There is a great and noble cry of Satyagraha going round the country now. But in our times of difficulty, that is what we practised and for several weeks in the face of poverty and of starvation we showed here in this place by the help of our spiritual strength, qualities which have won us, and deservedly won us, a good reputation. For that reason you will see that our work has been of great success not only to ourselves but of value also to the Motherland. The great lessons which we have learnt in this place of suffering silently but at the same time cultivating a spirit of independence are being learnt by the Nation now under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. The glory of that particular experience was that during that struggle not a single individual received any hurt from us. But it is little use our talking of what had taken place in the past however successful. We have to think of the future which is of great value and importance. Do not think that in the coming year we shall have no troubles or difficulties. We will have difficulties, we will have troubles, we will have many things to consider together here, and therefore it is necessary that we should think of our future. The future work depends more on you than on myself. I can only indicate to you the lines of activity that you can follow. The first line of activity for every single individual amongst you, I would advise you is this : at the present time you look upon yourselves as individuals belonging to your families and perhaps a few of your friends. I think more, in the coming days, of the great country to which you belong, the country of which you are citizens, let me assure

you that it is always good Karma to be born in a country like this where the spiritual heritage of the race brings its own blessing, the greatest that is to be had in the world. What are you going to do for that same Motherland, though you may be humble, poor, illiterate and un-educated as you are sometimes called? Let me tell you that the future of our country does not depend on us, a few educated people who can write and talk but upon thousands and millions of poor people who have a culture of their own and who can teach us many things that our masters from western countries cannot teach us. Coming in your midst I have learnt a lesson which I had never learnt before moving in the midst of people who are rich and educated. You have within yourselves locked up in your hearts and in your minds, qualities and virtues which when once brought out will be of inestimable service to our country. I would like you, each single individual amongst you to develop within your conscience that power which is the basis of what will make you noblemen, citizens of a big country, a country of whose past we are so rightly proud. For that purpose, develop the quality amongst yourselves so that you present yourselves as one great brotherhood of all men and women and children who think alike, who feel alike, who aspire alike, whose inspiration comes from within yourselves and whose service is offered at the feet of the Motherland.

Self-Reliance

Remember that you have to develop that intense quality of self-reliance, of independence and above all of self-respect, so that no one, be he European or Indian, be he rich or a high casteman, can say to you a word of insult,

or of humiliation and disgrace. Take a little more interest in the coming year than you have taken in the past in the work of your Labour Union. We shall have to chalk out new plans, to make up new schemes so that the work of the Labour Union may make good and rapid progress. I hope that during the coming year we may be able to find amongst yourselves people who will take up offices in this Labour Union and relieve us who come from outside and who perhaps have little business to be here. Above all, keep up the religious attitude which you have kept up during the last year. That religious attitude has been of great service to us in the past and it is the one weapon, the one way, the one method whereby we shall gain our progress, our advancement, our liberty and our freedom. This morning we began with a religious prayer and religious procession. Look upon this great gathering as a religious gathering and think of the great things that have happened in the past in this country and pray for the blessings of those great Rishis who always watch, inspire and instruct all the children of the Motherland, and may Their blessings rest on our heads, humble though we may be, so that we may offer our services at Their feet for the benefit of our common Motherland.

THE TRAMWAY MEN'S UNION

In March 1919 a serious difference of opinion arose between the Tramwaymen's Union and the Tramway Company Limited, in which Mr. Wadia took a prominent part and delivered the following speeches:—

On March 11th

I am sorry that you have another strike which will tell on your conditions in the days that lie in front. I

have not very carefully studied yet the position which has led you to this particular strike but I am sure that with the help of your leader, the President, Mr. Kumaraswamy Chetti, you will be able to bring the strike to a successful close. Whatever the issue of the strike' whatever the causes, and whatever the result of the strike may be, the one advice I would give you is, in whatever you do stand all together and act unitedly. That is the one essential factor that you will, have to bear in mind. The second thing that I would like to remind you of is this, that the success of your strike will depend on two things on the righteousness and the truthfulness of the cause which has led you to strike work ; secondly, the manner of righteousness and truthfulness by which you will carry on your work in the days of strike. Days of hardship and suffering are before you, and my advice to you is, never do during these days anything which will bring the least discredit to your good name. In everything you do take the advice of the President of your Union. Mr. Kumarawsamy Chetti has been with you for sometime now. You know him and he knows your aspirations, thoughts and discussions. Therefore, my advice to you is stand all united like one man, follow the leader when he gives you advice, consult among yourselves and behave in a noble, and good and peaceful fashion.

On March 13th

My Brothers,—This is the third day of your strike and it is clear that public opinion is in your favour and sympathises with your requirements. It is equally clear that the employers want to be emphatic in their refusal to grant your requests. Therefore before

you lies a struggle perhaps long and certainly arduous. It is clear that the demands formulated by you are reasonable and are based on grounds which are just and righteous. But the mere fact that your demands are just will not be sufficient to bring round your employers who have already shown a certain amount of unreasonableness in the plea that they have put forward in answer to your requests. Under the circumstances you will have to keep on consulting each other and stand united in face of strong opposition. It is rumoured that from other parts of the country like Bombay and Calcutta people are going to be brought to run the tramway line in Madras. I do not think that such a plan will altogether succeed. For I know something of the wages that are paid to Calcutta and Bombay tramwaymen. And if these men are brought here they will certainly demand wages far in advance of what you are getting now, so that you need not be very anxious and afraid of that rumour. Many other difficulties might arise. But as I said to you on the first day the most important point is that you make up your mind, stand fast to the resolution to which you come and follow the advice of the President of your Tramway Union. Meanwhile don't waste your time; but try to get some work for every day and earn as much as you possibly can. If such a course is not possible for you then you must stand united here and only see that the time that is left to you is not used in anything that is wrong or bad. The most important point for you is to come to a decision, stick to it definitely every day and not divide yourselves into little groups or parties, one group thinking one way and another thinking in another manner. I am told that you are ready

to go in this fashion remaining on strike for a fortnight more. (A voice " And more, Sir".) Do not only be ready for one fortnight but if necessary be ready for a month or even for a longer period. And remember that in this difficult period that lies in front of you, you must depend first and foremost on yourselves and must look to outside help only in the second place. In proportion as you help yourselves will the great Gods help you and give you strength. Remember that each one standing up for his own position brings a strength to the Union and that if there is one single person who wavers he brings weakness to the whole lot of you. Therefore every single one of you must recongnise that you are doing a great work, that you are fighting a noble fight and that if any one of you gives way it is the weakening of the hand of the whole army of you. Therefore remember this that in the difficult times that are ahead, you require the great virtues of patience and endurance and self-sacrifice. You will require patience day after day. You will require the quality of endurance and suffering everyday that goes by. And lastly you will require the spirit of self-sacrifice which will enable you to bear all your burdens and remain cheerful in the midst of all struggles. And in this way I would like you to go on with your struggle and I will repeat what I have said before this, if, your cause is just and righteous, as it seems to me to be, and if your motives are clean, as they are reported to be, then victory is sure to be with you in long run.

On March 17th

MY BROTHERS,—It is with great pleasure that I note that you have been keeping up with the work which

you have started more than a week ago. Every day that goes by shows the inner strength which lies at the foundation of your Tramway Men's Union. I think the time has come for you to realize one more important fact and that point I am going to put to you this afternoon. You must realize that in the struggle that lies in front of you, you must not only stand united as I advised you, but you must insist on doing one important thing, you must clearly insist that your Union is recognized in any kind of negotiation that is carried on. Do not negotiate outside the ranks of the Union. Do not let anyone negotiate save your own President of the Tramway Men's Union. If anyone comes to you you must give the answer that they must go to the President of the Union. And in this remember that you are fighting not only your battle but you are fighting the cause of the poor labourers in this country of India. And for this reason : once these employers of labour realized that Unions must be recognized in all disputes then it will be possible for us to do the work that we want to do and help you in elevating your sufferings and raising your status in society. Therefore my first advice to you is stand altogether united. My second advice to you is that you must let the Union and the President of the Union negotiate any kind of settlement whatsoever. If people come to you and bring you any kind of terms to go to work, your answer in every single case is "go to the President of our Union." That is a very, very important thing and I want you to clearly think of it. I know of the nature of the struggle that later you will have to carry on when the strike is over. And we must try to lay proper foundations for the building that we will have to raise

later on. There is a very great danger if any settlement is arrived at without the sanction of the President of the Union. The first thing will be, it will be said, that you have not obeyed your President, that the President has not been able to do much for you and that you came to terms through the help of other people. Those of you who have taken great and active part in this struggle will suffer, and once the Union is weakened then you will not be able to carry on the struggle which you will have to carry on. Never mind even if you have to be defeated. It is better to be defeated remaining in the Union, defeated with the help of the Union, than, to succeed letting the Union go down. You must make the terms of settlements as members of the Union and if the Union's terms are not accepted then you should not accept any terms that are offered to you. Now I say that thing purposely to you to-day because efforts may be made in the coming days to win you away from the Union. You may even be told that you will be given everything that you want if you disown the Union. Efforts should be made to see that the Union is thoroughly recognized. Because it will be the effort of all the employers to weaken the cause of labour unions in this country. You yourselves see the difference between the strike that took place a few months ago and the strike that is going on. You are more successful to-day because you have the Union. That is why you must get yourselves ready and prepared to stand by the Union for another fifteen days, for another month if need be, and see that the struggle is a real success and that you gain a great and fine victory. Don't lose heart, and remember that the struggle in which you have gathered is a

struggle not for yourselves only but for all the poor labourers everywhere. Public sympathy is with you; and efforts are being made to show the cause which is yours to the public and make them understand actually what is happening. A public meeting is to be held the day after to-morrow at Gokhale Hall when Mrs. Besant will preside. (Loud cheers.) And we will explain to the public how you are suffering and whose mistake it is that the tramways are not running in the City of Madras. Your President is doing all he possibly can for you and your duty is to stand by the Union, of which he is the President, and follow the lead that he can give you. That is the advice that I want to give to-day and I want you to thoroughly consider it and be ready and prepared to give a considered answer to anyone who comes to you, asking him to go to the President for any terms that he may propose. (Loud cheers.)

ON MARCH 25TH

MY BROTHERS,—You are all aware of the big meeting which took place in the Gokhale Hall on last Sunday. Through it the public of Madras have come to know intimately of your grievances. As a result of that meeting, this morning's paper, the *Madras Times*, has written an article on the Tramwaymen's strike. I do not think it necessary for me to reply to the various allegations and remarks that are made in that article. But I want to refer to one particular point which has some intimate relation with our strike. It is said the Tramway Company is fighting pluckily against you people, who are trying to take from them in an unfair manner and, a strong word is used for you, namely, that you are trying to

blackmail the Tramway Company. That is a deliberate falsehood, and all we can say is that the writer of this particular article has uttered that falsehood in sheer ignorance. But the thing which is of intimate importance to us is the presumption on the part of the writer of that article that you can hold out for fifteen days more without outside help and that, after that, you will require some kind of financial aid from the people of Madras. He says that you struck work after getting your pay and therefore you will be able to hold out for one month only. Now it is our duty plainly to tell those who are concerned and interested in this article that it will not come to pass that after another fifteen days you will return to your work. You must therefore make it abundantly, clear in your talk, that at the end of another fortnight *i.e.*, after a whole month's strike you will not go to work again and that you are prepared to go on with the work of the strike for a longer period. It is a fact that your friends who helped you and worked with you are trying to raise financial aid in this city and elsewhere. This work which you have undertaken and which you have kept up with admirable spirit for more than fifteen days will continue and does not entirely depend on the financial outside aid. It does not depend altogether on the money aid that comes to us from outside but primarily it depends on the moral strength which you have so admirably displayed and which I am sure you will continue to express in the days that lie in front. And, therefore, I would repeat the advice that I gave you in the first instance, *viz.*, remain united as you have remained united during the last fortnight. I am very much pleased at the way in which

you have respectfully but firmly and emphatically answered the missionary friends who came to you yesterday. I think all matters of negotiations may be safely left into the hands of the President of this Union, Mr. Kumaraswami Chetti, and I hope you will repeat what you have said yesterday to our missionary friends to others who come to you to persuade you to join work or to open negotiations with the Tramway Company. And I want to bring to your notice one more fact. You have established during the last fortnight a very good name for yourselves for sobriety, for quietness, for calm work and above all for an indomitable spirit. See that you maintain your good name that you have obtained and see that you bring the strike to a successful end, successful from your stand-point. I think that in the course of another few days something must happen, because the people of Madras are getting irritated and they will not put up with this kind of highhandedness on the part of the Tramway Company which has produced in this City of Madras a disgraceful state of affairs. (Cheers.)

ON MARCH 28TH

MY BROTHERS,—We have met here to-day for a very important purpose. I discussed with your special Committee yesterday the whole position and have frankly put before it all the arguments arising out of the 14 points of Sir Clement Simpson which Mr. Molony, the President of the Madras Municipality, has published. After a long discussion your Committee arrived at a decision and were prepared to answer Sir Clement yesterday afternoon; the members of the Committee

said that they had already consulted you all and knew fully what answer you were going to give. But I advised them to consult you once again, to sleep over the decision for a night and to come together again now. I see that you are all determined and thoroughly approve of the decision your Committee came to. I have seen the text of the resolutions to be passed here and I congratulate you on the firmness you have shown, and pray that the Rishis and Devas may bless you and give you strength to endure and to sacrifice and emerge victorious from this fight, come out triumphant in this struggle. Continue to be peaceful and righteous in your ways in the days that are to come, as you have been in the days that lie behind. Depend on your own selves and lean first on your own moral strength, and may the gods give you the boon you desire and certainly deserve.

During this Tramwaymen's strike two public meetings were held, the first at the Gokhale Hall, March 23rd, under the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant, at which Mr. Wadia moved the following resolution, and made the following speech:—

"This public meeting of the citizens of Madras in view of the frequent industrial troubles now occurring, requests the Government of Madras to devise immediate measures to prevent them by the creation of Arbitration Boards for the settlement of all outstanding differences."

He said:—

There are two or three important points which are embodied in this resolution. The first which needs explanation is the assertion that industrial troubles of late have become frequent in this City of Madras, and

it is necessary for me to tell you why they have become frequent and why we may expect them to continue. There are

Two Important Factors

which we ought to bear in mind in the study of the labour problem in this particular city. The first is the very strained economic situation. I assure you from personal knowledge and experience that the economic conditions which arise out of the earnings of our labourers and the money that they have to spend on the necessities of life are such that it is not humanly possible for them to bear any more patiently the starvation and the difficulties that stare them in the face. That economic difficulty is not one of very recent growth but can be traced as existing in our midst, for many years past. It has been growing, gradually, till now a point has been reached where it is not possible any more for the labourers to face the situtation. You all know how the prices of food-stuffs, of clothing material, in fact of every necessity of life have gone up and how month by month, and week by week, the labourer has to face greater and greater difficulties in purchasing all the food-stuffs which are scarce and which in the second place have become exceedingly dear. You might ask—if this economic situtaion has been for some time so difficult why was it not pointed out before? For the very simple reason that we who belong to the educated classes did not realize the problems that confronted the labourers of Madras in the years gone by. When the difficulties arose and when the critical point was reached and when the labourers came to me and I went in their midst, then only could I find out by careful study what the real difficulty

was. You might ask what is the cause of this. There are many reasons, political, social, moral, the usual fight between Capital and Labour, the facts of supply and demand in this country, the gradual rise of new industries, the change in the outlook that has been permeating the masses of this country. That last point brings me to the second factor which is very important. It is the moral factor which affects not only this city, not only this province but the entire country. We have heard a great deal of

THE CHANGE OF THE ANGLE OF VISION

of our political rulers in England. There has been a little change in the angle of vision of the labourers in India too. They are not prepared any more to take lying down, as they have taken in years gone by, all that is told to them. Language, harsh and rough, treatment unkind and often cruel; they are not prepared to take these things quietly. A new spirit is animating them and for every wrong action the labourer is now not only willing, but finds himself compelled, to get up and answer back. You might say that is a wrong spirit for the poor labourer to display in the presence of the man who employs him and pays him his monthly, weekly or daily wages. It may be so, but take into account the new spirit that is abroad, not only in this country but in the world. The War has changed many things in the world. The great Russian Revolution has not only changed things in Russia but in London, in Paris, even in Berlin; that same spirit has manifested itself, that same force has been working in India and has touched the masses of the Motherland may be unconsciously and indirectly.

The labourers form part of the masses and this new spirit has been working in their midst. Some of us who work with them have encouraged that new spirit, and it is necessary that the children of the Motherland should manifest that spirit of manliness of courage, of independence, and show to those who employ them, be they Europeans or be they Indians, that they are human beings. In this fight between Capital and Labour there must be taken into account the factor that labourers are human beings. This spirit is going to grow more and more. No Government, however autocratic or bureaucratic, no social polity, however despotic or tyrannical, is going to put down that spirit in India any more. The labourer has begun to stand up; he knows the strength of his feet and he will no more go down on the ground and merely entreat. He has found his feet and he has found his voice to a certain extent and he is going to speak out and express himself in a courageous manner. With these two factors staring us in the face, it is clear that we are going to have difficulties everywhere in India. When I perceived this I went to the labourers and identified myself with the Labour Movement and formed a Union at Perambur. If you do not organize them, the expression of the spirit of the mob would be more danger to the country and such an expression none of us wants to see in India. Those who deride these organizations, as mischievous or political in character, talk in a manner which only betrays their ignorance.

THE DANGER TO THE COUNTRY

to the industries, to the trades would lie in a disorganized mob full of the new spirit; such a manifestation would surely be harmful and not harmonious to

the growth and development of our social life. You might enquire why we ask in this resolution that the Government of Madras should form Arbitration Boards to bring about harmonious relationships between Capital and Labour in this city. I think that Government intervention is necessary at the present stage. Capital and Labour have at present no connecting link between them. The Capitalists, Indian as well as European, have their own interests and those interests naturally clash with the interests of the labourers. It is necessary that some organization with a certain amount of authority should step in and give a helping hand in the creation of machinery which is going to produce harmonious relationships between Capital and Labour. Where is an organization now which will be able to produce such a result ? Look at the two troubles we have had in the city of Madras : first the lock-out in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills and now the strike of the Tramwaymen. The Government sits quiet. This second strike is a matter which affects our civic life and makes that life for thousands of people more difficult, and yet the local Government has not a word to say in the matter. There is a Labour Union but employers have taken up an attitude that they will not recognize that Union. You must have seen from the correspondence that was published in *New India* how several times the President of the Union, my friend Mr. Kumaraswami Chettiar, wrote to the Agent of the Tramway Company and got no reply. I will tell you why he got no reply: not because the authorities of the Tramway Company have nothing to say, but because they do not want to address Mr. Kumaraswami Chetty.

Recognize the Union

I am sure that if a promise was given to the Company that the Tramwaymen's Union would be disbanded, we would have had some result already in the shape of certain offers from the Company. If the Company will not recognize the Union, who is going to interfere? The President of the Union has got no reply and he sits quiet, doing his work with men who have struck work. There have been no tramcars running for the last fifteen days in the City of Madras (shame), and the Government of Madras looks on, and all that we have had of official interference was a little talk at the last meeting of the

Madras Corporation

—talk which came to nothing. Are we going to tolerate this kind of indifference on the part of officials who do not use Tramways for their work? Are we going to tolerate this kind of apathy on the part of Municipal officials and authorities? We therefore ask the Government to interfere and devise some kind of machinery which may operate in all cases of difficulties, before the difficulties become acute and result either in lock-out or strike. The best method we know from experience is the

Formation of Arbitration Boards.

Any party which objects to an arbitration board admits that the wrong is on its side. If the employer objects to an arbitration board, it is clear that the employer is in the wrong and is afraid to go to arbitration, which is impartial and just. If the labourer does not want an arbitration board the case of the labourer must necessarily be weak. The formation of arbitration boards where representatives of both sides

come together, examine all the factors of the dispute and give a correct and impartial judgment binding on both sides—that seems to me to be the best method that could be devised. It is not difficult. It has been done informally in this city more than once, and what has been done for one particular institution may be repeated for others. I have known these Tramway people for the last many months. When the Union was first started I was continuously consulted and I took a great part in the building up of the Union. It is necessary to realize that these men are not asking for something which is unreasonable or unjust. Study their case thoroughly, and I ask those of you who are interested to go to the Tramway Union head-quarters to see what kind of work has been done for them, what teaching has been given to them, what spirit permeates that institution, and find out whether there is any kind of disobedience or ill-feeling or any expression which may be regarded as in the nature of an evil. You will find these men sober, straightforward, reasonable ; and the greatest proof that they have given of the strength of their cause is that for a whole fortnight, without any outside financial aid, they have been able to stand on their own legs and keep up the strike with their own moral strength (Cheers). I believe that they will be able to do that still for another fortnight or more but of that we need not talk. Let the Tramway men show of what stuff they are made. I know them ; and as their cause is just and righteous, they must succeed in the end. It is amazing for me to see such a lack of public interest in the matter. What is the public, which has been using the Tramway day after day for years, doing?

If there is no agitation raised by the citizens of Madras as a result of this trouble arising out of the strike ? We may as well propose that the Tramway is absolutely unnecessary for the city and may be abolished. If on the other hand Tramway is a necessity to the civic life of Madras, then you ought to speak out your minds, and the public ought to take the initiative in the matter and raise an agitation which will compel the Municipality and the Government to take steps and bring to a close a strike which, in my opinion, from the point of view of the men is wholly justifiable. (Applause.)

The second public meeting was held on the Triplicane Beach under the Presidency of Mr. S. Kasturiranga Iyengar, on April 3rd, 1919, at which Mr. Wadia moved the following resolution and made the following speech.

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—The resolution which is committed to me runs as follows :—

The Citizens of Madras in this public meeting assembled once again express their keen regret that the Tramway Company has not yet seen its way to satisfy the reasonable demands of the men on strike and requests the Government and the Corporation to take immediate steps to bring about a settlement.

As you are aware, Gentlemen, for the last three weeks in this capital City of the Madras Presidency, a scandalous spectacle of inefficiency has been displaying itself. Those of you who are constantly using the tram service must know from experience what some of us do not know, what hardships and inconveniences the stopping of the tram service has entailed. But to me the more important factor is the suffering of the Tramwaymen whose demands have been very rea-

sonable, as the resolution contends. I have studied with care all the demands that the Tramwaymen, have put forward. I know the history of the Movement. I know about the two strikes within a short period of time—which in itself is a condemnation of the management of the Madras Tramway Company. Now, Gentlemen, as you are aware, the Tramwaymen have united themselves into an organization and have copied the western system of an organised campaign for the redressing of their grievances. There is nothing wrong in such a banding together, in the forming of such an organization. You are aware also how some European capitalists in this city have trotted out on another occasion in reference to another matter the statement that they would recognize any Labour Union which has no connection whatsoever with political agitation, Well, Gentlemen, you are aware of what took place some months ago in reference to the lock-outs of the Buckingham and the Carnatic Mills. On account of the pressure of labour work it was necessary for me to get people interested in this work to take up the responsibility of various Unions, and on that account it came to pass that several Unions which were established by me passed out of my hands into other hands more capable than my own. Now the Tramway Union elected as its President a man who is not a political agitator, Mr. Kumaraswamy Chettiar. (Cheers) I know he has done admirable work, not only during the strike, but long before the strike. I know that social uplift work has been carried on by him and others who work with him. He is not, as I said, a political agitator. The central point towards which all arguments and struggle in this particular

matter is converging is that Mr. Kumaraswami Chetti shall not be in the Tramway Union.

THE FOURTEEN POINTS.

Gentlemen, you have heard of the celebrated fourteen points of Sir Clement Simpson (Laughter), the fourteen points which reduce themselves, when properly studied and analysed, to nothingness. (Laughter). These fourteen points were trotted out not by Sir Clement Simpson but by the President of the Madras Corporation, who took upon himself the responsibility of being the spokesman of Sir Clement Simpson. (Laughter.) And curiosity makes us ask why Mr. Molony, who does not interfere in other people's business, took upon himself to bring those fourteen points before the Corporation, the fourteen points which, as your President just pointed out to you, have in a way glamoured even some of our Commissioners. For let me assure you that if you put the two documents together, first all the correspondence that has passed from Mr. Kumaraswamy Chetty, the President of the Union to the Tramway Company, and the second, the document of the fourteeen points, you will find that Sir Clement Simpson's answer is not only vague, but is meant to put off casual enquirers. You will not be able to understand the hollowness of these fourteen points unless you examine both sides. Now we shall see what is the real crux of the problem. At first they said they were not going to recognize the Union. At a later stage they gave way in certain matters, and one was that they were prepared to recognize the Union provided the Union was made up of Tramwaymen only. Now who are the Tramway Company to dictate to their men as to who shall

lead them or who shall be the President or the Secretary of the Union ? The Tramwaymen, having organized a Union of their own, have a right to elect a President. It is said we do not want outsiders to meddle with our affairs. I want you to realize why an outsider is not wanted. Because the moment a man is made President from one of the workers of the Tramway Company, that man will be a marked man. His promotion will be slow and will only come at very lengthy periods. His service itself will be insecure. The Secretary of the Tramway Union, a man who organized the Union, who is the Secretary and who was the Secertary at the time of the first strike, was turned out on some pretext. If the Secretary was turned out, much more so will this be the case with the President. There is another argument. It is this. Tramwaymen while they have a culture of their own, while they understand their interests, while they know what their grievances are, while they can discuss these grievances among themselves, are not yet in a position to put their case before their employers and the public. The very fact that the men came to organize themselves into a Union shows that all those previous efforts have miserably failed. The very fact that they came and formed into a Union shows that the treatment meted out to the Tramwaymen was not found satisfactory. What is the objection even if a political agitator organized them ? A political agitator does not go necessarily for the benefit of his own political agitation into their midst. And even if he did go, what is that to Sir Clement Simpson or to Mr. Powell ? Why should not the Indian labourers be organized into Labour Unions of all kinds and sorts ? Now you will support the

Tramwaymen if you say to the Company that their men have a right to organize themselves and to elect a President of their own. It is not the business of the Tramway Company to interfere in the matter of that organization. That, then, is the central point. You ask in your resolution that the Corporation and the Government should interfere. I think you ought to make clear that the necessary interference must come along this line. If you do not recognize the Union you will not be serving the men properly and rightly; for, once their Union is disbanded, the men will be treated unfairly and those who have been leaders among the men, who have organized, who have conducted the strike, who have got spirit, who have shown what they are capable of, those will be turned out, and once they are turned out, disunited, the weaker men will suffer. To me, therefore, it is a matter of principle. It is a matter of smaller importance whether, instead of two pairs of dresses, they should get two or one. But it is important that the Union should be thoroughly recognised, and I do not see why Mr. Powell should not correspond or discuss with the chosen representative of the Tramwaymen. That is a crucial, simple and central proposition which we have to face. You might say, let the Government and the Corporation settle this affair. Yes. But in the settlement of this affair let it be clearly understood that this is the first, the principal demand of the Tramwaymen.

On Public Agitation

Now, Gentlemen, there is a responsibility that lies not only on the Government, not only on the Corporation, but on the public of Madras and especially the

Tram-using public of Madras. It is surprising to me that for three weeks there has been a strike of such a character as we have witnessed, and that there has been practically no agitation from the public. The President has rightly said that in three days' time in England 'such a thing would be brought to an end by Government interference. Yes, because the Government knows that things will be made hot for them by the public if they do not interfere. It is surprising that for three weeks the people have gone on. I have many a time asked friends a question which I would like to ask this assembly : Is the Tramway service an essential thing for the City of Madras or not? It seems to me it is not essential. For if it was essential, there would have been a strong agitation compelling the Tramway Company to take steps and to give some kind of service to the city, if they could not come to reasonable arrangements with their men. If you want the Tramway then you ought to speak out, or if in the interests of the city we find that we can go on without the Tramway service, then let us say so. Now I do not think in this 20th Century a town like Madras could afford to be without a Tramway service. Why should we, the public of Madras, put up with this kind of scandalous inefficiency on the part of the Tramway Company, this criminal lethargy on the part of the Corporation and the Government. If we have to blame the Government, if we have to blame the Corporation, to a certain extent I feel we have to blame ourselves. For I do not see that any great agitation is taking place either on the point of inconvenience to the public or on the point of suffering to the Tramwaymen.

SUFFERING AND DISCIPLINE

The Tramwaymen's suffering is intense. Because the Union is there, because they are banded together, because they are a well-disciplined organized body, do not think that they are without suffering. The men may not speak, they may not make themselves obnoxious, they may not show signs of displeasure or irritation or impatience because morning and evening men like Mr. Kumarswami Chetty go there to explain, keep them under control, check, persuade and show them what their duty is. What would have been the condition without this Union it is difficult for me to conjecture. I do not think that these more than thousand men could have kept themselves quiet and peaceful citizens, showing an indomitable spirit and a courage and perseverance without a Union. That is a point which you have to bear in mind, the good side of the Union in spite of Mr. Powell and Sir Clement Simpson. If there had been no Union, there would have been looting in the city. But for it there would have been undesirable expressions of the impatience and irritation of the men. For, remember, even Indian crowds are made up of human beings with some feelings. If we have them under control, if we have persuaded them to behave like gentlemen, it goes to the credit of the Indian temperament. I challenge Mr. Powell to hold one thousand Englishmen in the condition which he has imposed on the Tramwaymen of Madras. (Cheers.) It would not be possible for him. Mr. Powell would have been sent about his business if he were in England. (Laughter). It is not a matter for laughter. Come with me during the morning and evening, and see what the intense suffering of these people is. Then you will

be and realize what their spirit is, to go on for three weeks in a manner which is almost divine in its resignation. Without work, knowing at the end of the month there will be no money for them with the poor financial response from the public of Madras—that is the spirit and it is commendable. It is the spirit which is going to make up Indian citizenship in future. And I would like you, therefore, to consider your position, your own responsibility in the matter. I thoroughly agree that the Government shall interfere, the Corporation shall interfere, but there is another body which could interfere more effectively that the Govenment and the Corporation, that body is the public of Madras. I want you to take into consideration that aspect of the question.

Boycott

To-day I am told a few tramcars are running. I am informed, and I can only repeat the information, that it is not because some of the strikers have gone back, but because outside men have been imported into the city of Madras. If that is so, what is your duty ? You, who are using it, boycott it. (Cheers). It is a clear issue and you ought to face it. If we are not going to face it as citizens of Madras, it would be of little use to ask the Government to interfere or the Corporation to interfere. Another thing that you should note—the Municipal Commissioners. Every single one of you who has a vote, please tell your Commissioner that unless he takes immediate steps he will not have your vote in future. There is no use sending your own men and let them do what they are doing. If the Company sits quiet, equally negligent are your Commissioners. You should bring pressure to bear upou them. It is no use their saying:

"Why don't you give way? We shall see later on." Do not give way, because this is a moral issue. Are you allowing more than a thousand men to suffer because some Commissioner says: "Later on I will see what to do." No. The issue is clear. We cannot altogether trust the word of the Tramway Company; because in the last strike all the terms that the Company came to were not kept. Last time it was agreed that the men who led and engineered the strike, would not be turned out. Mr. Powell did not keep his promise. On one pretext or another the men have been sent out. What Mr. Powell has done in the past he will do in the future. Are you going to risk the position of these men who have suffered? Are you going to allow it? I hope not. You will excuse me for speaking at length. But I feel very strongly in the matter. Our future depends on these poor classes. These people should be banded together—and this is an effort at it—and if we are going to allow these efforts to go to wreck and ruin we will be neglecting one of our gravest responsibilities, one of our most solemn duties. (Cheers).

REPRESENTATION OF LABOUR IN ENGLAND.

On April 26th, 1919, Mr. Wadia made the following speech:—

MY BROTHERS, We are beginning our weekly meeting from to-day. I propose to put before you next Saturday some very important points for consideration. We shall then be able to tell you definitely what work we propose to do in the future for the Labour Movement in India and also in England. Several of our Indian friends are going to England and I wish the Madras Labour Union

to send a message through those friends to the Labour Unions in England. During the week I want you to think very carefully over this particular proposition. If you are going to send a message to Labour Unions in Great Britain, what is the message that you are going to send to them? It is very important. We have a few days before us. Some of our friends are going on the 10th and 17th May, and I would like our Labour Union to send a definite message to English Labour Unions through them. I would like you to consider this and speak about it to those who are members of your Managing Committee which meets every Tuesday, so that we will draw up certain definite resolutions and a programme which we can hand over to the representatives of India who go to Great Britain.

Mr. John Scurr, a great Labour leader from England is coming out to Madras in the course of a few days. He will be staying with us at Adyar and I hope to bring him out here next Saturday for the meeting. He will be of great use and value to us and he will surely fight on behalf of the Labour Union of Madras and labourers of India when he returns to England. One of his principal objects in visiting Madras is to come to our Labour Union and see what kind of work we have been doing. You must see that next Saturday's meeting is a very representative one. We will be able to prepare our programme for our Indian representatives and give a copy of that programme to our friend Mr. John Scurr. He will help our Indian friends when they arrive in England. You may also consider if there is any one particular individual who you would like to go to England on your behalf and fight out your battles.

We will have to get the Factory Act properly changed so that the hours of work are reduced. These are the important points that I want you to consider during the week and help me with your suggestions, so that we will be able to do something for the poor labourers of India with the help of our Madras Labour Union.

At this meeting the following resolution, moved by Mr. T. V. Kalyanasundarum Mudaliar, was duly seconded and supported and carried unanimously amid great enthusiasm :—

"The Madras Labour Union requests their President, Mr. B. P. Wadia to plead the cause of the Labourers in India before the British Labour Party in England and the British Democracy."

On 3rd May a meeting of the Madras Labour Union was held with Mr. Wadia in the chair. He said :—

MY BROTHERS,—It is a very happy occasion on which we are met to-day and welcome in our midst our great leader Mrs. Annie Besant. As you know, she is going to England to fight the cause of Home Rule for India, and I am sure that the resolution that you are going to pass here to-day will enable her also to fight your battles while she is in Great Britain. The second resolution which your Committee has prepared requires our friend Mr. John Scurr to represent your grievances to the Labour Party in England to which he belongs.

The following resolutions were passed unanimously :—

"The Members of the Madras Labour Union beg to place on record Mrs. Annie Besant's sympathy with the Labour Movement in India and request her to use

her great influence on the British Labour Party to secure redress of the grievances of labourers and to assist their President, Mr. Wadia, in his efforts in that direction."

"The Members of the Madras Labour Union express their gratitude to Mr. John Scurr for having taken keen interest in labour conditions here and earnestly request him to co-operate with their President, Mr. Wadia in his efforts in England to further their cause."

At the same meeting an address (the text of which will be found in the appendix) was presented to Mr. Wadia, who replied as follows :

MY BROTHERS,—Let me thank you for the kindness you have shown me and the confidence which you have reposed in me in presenting this address. When I am in England it will be my primary duty to speak to the Labour Party and to the labour organizations there on your behalf. I am not forgetting that in England, while I am speaking on your behalf and fighting your fight, I will have to meet representatives of the other side—Sir Clement Simpson, and also, I am informed, Mr. Powell of the Tramway Co., who is going to England. But I know that our cause is so righteous and true, so palpably just and right, that in the struggle between the two parties there is only one end and that is complete victory for us. One other and somewhat serious difficulty that, as your representative, I will have to face, will be to speak on your behalf against the employers who happen to be Indians. Already I see that a well-known capitalist of Bombay, also a Parsi belonging to my own family, has come out to-day in England with a statement about the Extremists and the Home Rulers who

are championing the cause of Indian labourers. He is a Director of many Mills in Bombay and the Manager of more than one, so that it will be easy for me to show why he is launching himself against us—because his pocket is touched and because, if the reforms that we want for the labourers come into existence, he will be perhaps adversely affected. If he represents, while in England, the battle against us, you may be rest assured that he will be assisted by people who are also against Self-Government or Home Rule for India. Already in the telegram that has come from London to-day we find that he has spoken out against our work, and that is perhaps the result of some cable that has gone to England from Madras intimating my departure for England. But you need not be afraid of the struggle that I will have to carry on there, because with the help of friends like Mr. John Scurr, I am sure that we will win the battle. But what I am a little nervous about is leaving you here to face difficulties that are sure to arise while I am away. I have all along given you the advice which I am very glad Mr. Scurr has repeated to you himself to-day. What I am afraid of is this, which I want to speak to you frankly about. The best way in which our work in England will be spoiled will be to show that here you are not able to hold your own and stand united while I am fighting your battle there. I warn you that your employers and other peoples who want to work against you will try to wreck this Labour Union which we have built up with hard work and labour for nearly thirteen months. While I am away I would advise you not at all to think of a strike under any provocation. You may be pushed to strike and on good grounds. Even then, when you have

a legitimate cause given to you, my advice is, bear with patience any difficulties that are put in your way, but do not go on strike. You will be able to achieve that, but you will not be able to meet the second difficulty, namely the declaration of a lock-out on the part of the employers. If for any purpose your employers declare a lock-out, then, I should advise you to stand united and behave as you behaved during the last period of the lock-out. Only, during the lock-out stick to two substantial principles under all difficulties. If your wages are cut, regard this as a minor matter. If your holidays are taken away, regard that as a minor matter. If your hours of work are increased, regard that as a small affair. You can give way on all those points while I am away. But on two points never give way, whatever happens. If during a lock-out, in the process of inter-communication between the employers and the labourers, an offer is made to you independently of the Madras Labour Union, refuse to recognize it. If necessary, starve; if necessary, beg; but don't go past the Madras Labour Union, because the moment you go past the Madras Labour Union, a wire will be sent to England and then I cannot do anything, because the Madras Labour Union will not be existing. We have gained a certain recognition of the Union during the last lock-out. Don't lose what we have gained by a sheer hard fight of nearly a fortnight. If you stand by that, then a second proposition will be put to you, and that also you must resist; and that will be: "We will recognize the Madras Labour Union, but we will not recognize persons who are not labourers but who happen to be officials of the Union. Take away Mr. Wadia as President, take away

Mr. Kalyanasundaram Mudaliar as Vice-President, and put so and so, labourers themselves, as President and Vice-President." Do not do it. For any reduction in hours, for any rise in wages, do not accept those two things. I want to remind you that many things I have said here from time to time in this way have come true. I warn you that some such thing will happen while I am away. You must guard your interests and refuse to listen to people on those two fundamental central principles. Then do not forget that the strength of the Union lies in the moral basis, the spiritual foundations on which our Union is raised. Our principles have been to recognize every single member of this Union as our brother. Stand united like one man, and in the second place do not forget the lesson which I have preached here over and over again : that you must not let yourselves be insulted in any way by people who call themselves superiors, educated, learned or wise ; refuse to accept any word of insult that comes from any quarter, be that quarter a Foreign capitalist or an Indian capitalist. In all times of difficulty and struggle depend on your own selves and remember that the great Rishis of India, the great Devas of India, are watching your cause and they will test you in terms of truth and righteousness, and by truth and righteousness alone you will win the victory. More than what Mrs. Besant can do, more than what our friend Mr. John Scurr can do, more than what I can do in England—everything will depend on you who will stand by your principles, united, organized, and fight all those powers of evil of which Mr. Scurr spoke. We are merely your representatives, instruments to carry your message to England. The real struggle

depends on you and on your fortitude, patience, courage and steadfastness will depend the success that we will gain by our mutual work. I thank you once again for all that you have done for me during this last year of our mutual work and I hope I shall come back to India worthy of the confidence which you have placed in me, and will come not only with a message of hope but with surety and certainty that our cause has won a victory.

The Rickshawwallahs' Union presented an address on May 6th (see appendix) to Mr. Wadia who in reply made the following speech :—

I do not think that it is necessary for me to reply at any length to this particular address. My opinion is that such a profession as that which rickshawwallas follow ought never to be tolerated in any civilized society. For those who sit in a rickshaw, to be driven and drawn by human beings who are their brothers, it is a matter of great shame, and the one thing in which I can help the rickshawwallas when I am in England will be to agitate so that the Government does not allow such a degrading profession to be carried on in a civilized city like the City of Madras.

The Madras Tramwaymen's Union presented on May 19th an address (see appendix) to Mr. Wadia on the eve of his departure to England, and he made the following reply :—

MY BROTHERS.—I am very grateful to you for the address that you have presented to me, thereby giving me an opportunity of serving you during my forthcoming visit to Great Britain. Ever since we started our Madras Tramwaymen's Union we have had some very rough and difficult times. We have had two strikes

both of which have resulted in a certain gain to the Tramwaymen's Union. To many of you perhaps the first strike must appear as resulting in more or less of a failure. That is not really so. The first strike gave us the material on which we have been trying to build up our Tramwaymen's Union, and the apparent results were also good, for we gained victory along many points which we wanted. The second strike resulted in complete success for us. But I view that success from perhaps a different point of view than the one from which you are looking at it. You may be looking at the success of the second strike from the point of view of the increasing wages, the question of leave, of clothing and of dress, and such other sundry matters which are no doubt of very vital interest and importance to you. To me, the victory that we have won by the help of the Tramwaymen's Union lies in the fact that, for the first time in the struggle between employers and employees, the very sane course of coming to a decision by an Arbitration Board appointed by both parties is of very great value and importance. The importance of that in itself is very great, but when you consider that your employers, the Tramway Company, have acknowledged the Union, its basis, its constitution and the way of its work, that in itself is a great gain, and that is due entirely to the splendid way in which you have carried on that strike in the city of Madras. By that course you have not only gained for yourselves; but the principle of the appointment of an Arbitration Board will stand as an example when, in other cases of difficulty, ways and methods will be searched for, or an amicable settlement thought of in such

cases of strikes or lock-outs. Your work, I believe in the months that lie in front of you will not be very difficult as in the months that lie behind. You have had your struggle, and now the time of consolidation is approaching. While I am away I would like you to work very hard to consolidate the Tramwaymen's Union in these premises. I need not give you the advice which I gave the other day to our brothers in Perambur in reference to strikes and lock-outs. I do not think that there will arise any necessity for you to go on strike or also for your employers to declare a lock-out. Times of safety, when there is no danger ahead, are in one sense very awkward and dangerous times for us, for then everything being smooth already, we are apt to go to sleep and do nothing. I would advise you to do a few things, taking, advantage of the peaceful times that lie in front of you. First you must build up your funds for the Tramway men's Union. You remember the very difficult time we have had during the last strike. We must always prepare for ourselves in building up our fund, so that in cases of necessity—may be a year hence, two years hence or five years hence—if we have to go on strike or face a lock-out we are not dependent on outsiders, but can rely on our own funds. The first thing, therefore, that I would like you to do is to build up a good strong fund for your Union. The second thing that I would like you to do is to appoint a small Sub-Committee of some of your members and ask them to put themselves by correspondence in communication with the Tramwaymen of Calcutta and of Bombay; appeal to them to form their own Tramwaymen's Unions in those big cities; then correspond with them

and find out the way in which they are treated, the scale of pay and wages fixed there, the methods of work, the hour and time period which are imposed on them and see if you cannot better your own condition by such a study. Thirdly by the help of that correspondence try to establish fraternal relations with your brother-workers in those great cities of Bombay and Calcutta. Union is strength. Because you are united you have won a victory in the strikes that have gone behind us. Have a greater union of all Tramwaymen in all parts of the country and begin with such unions in Bombay and Calcutta. Lastly, I would advise you to think of yourselves, of your comfort and your conveniences, the treatment which is meted out to you by your co-citizens in this place or by the Government officials or by your own countrymen and castemen. The whole tendency of the poorer classes in this country is to depend on some one else for help and benediction. I want you to realize that the greatest help that you can get for yourselves must come from within yourselves. I want you to realize that you are human beings and therefore have certain rights and privileges which you must demand and which you must possess. With the help of the labour that you are providing for the comfort and convenience of such a city as this, you are entitled to better wages, to better conditions of life, to better houses and better social status altogether. You should demand those things and the first step towards such right demand is to study your conditions and your own lives. Remember that you have in your hands not only the good of your own individual selves, not only the good of your own co-labourers but also you have in your hands

the interests and the welfare of the great country to which you belong. I want you to think of that. You have a part in the great coming new life which will express itself in this country in the coming months and the coming years. I want you to realize that and stand up and make your voices heard and your influence felt. Do not think that because you are poor, because you are called illiterate or uneducated, you should allow yourselves to go to a corner and be forgetten by other countrymen of yours who are rich or educated. You have in your hearts, in your minds a power divine which ought to help you towards that realization and enable you to take the right place in the great work of National importance that will be a done in the coming months in this country. I promise to do all that I possibly can for the entire Labour movement in this country in England where I am going. But you must help me while I am away by doing all this work by organizing other labour unions, enabling other people to come together, so that by the time I return we will be able to work hand in hand on a greater scale in wider field than we have been able to do in the past. I thank you once again for the address you have presented to me and have thus given me an opportunity of serving your cause in my own humble way.

On May 7th, the M. & S. M. Ry. Workshop Union presented an address to Mr. Wadia, text of which will be found in the appendix. In reply Mr. Wadia made the following speech :—

MY BROTHERS,—I am very glad that you, belonging to the M. & S. M. Ry. Workshop, have formed a

Union of your own. I can at once tell you that if you unite together, you will be one of the strongest unions not only in the City of Madras but in the entire Madras Presidency. I would advise you one thing and that is, do not be in a hurry to go about setting right your grievances, though they may be many. The first thing that I would like you to do is, to get all along the line at every place where there are workmen belonging to this Railway Company, to bring them together and to form small Unions. Just as the work of your Railway Company would not go on with only one workshop at Perambur but the Railway Company has to have workshops all along the line, so also you must have Labour Unions all along the line wherever these workshops exist. If during the coming six months when I am away in England you can form these Labour Unions all along the line, then I promise you that with the help of these Unions you will be able to redress all your grievances in practically a few days. For many years you have gone on putting up with grievances, with difficulties, with troubles and trials of all sorts and kinds. I would advise you to put up with those grievances for six months more, and spend all your time of the six months, all your energy, all that you have, in forming Unions all along the line where workshops exist. You are going to raise a magnificent building, but take some time and make your foundations very strong, and I would therefore advise you to put all your thought and energy into that work. When these Labour Unions are formed, leave the rest to those who would conduct the work on behalf of the Unions. To-day is not the time for me to speak to you and tell you all of the plan

that I have in my mind and the way in which our grievances may be redressed, When you are carrying on a fight, there are times when you must be silent, and there are times when you must speak out. This is your time to keep silent. Prepare your organizations, have your Labour Union and then we will see when the time comes what to say and how to say it. Meanwhile in England I shall make it a point to carefully study the organizations there which make the Railwaymen in England a very powerful body. In the meantime I request you with the help of your President to send me a short memorandum containing all that you have to say regarding the particular grievances from which you suffer here at the Perambur Workshop. I thank you very much for the presentation of this address and I promise you that I will leave no stone unturned, and do all that I possibly can to aid all the labourers of India and among them the people who work at the Railway Workshop at Perambur.

On May 7th the Printers' Union presented an address to Mr. Wadia, the text of which appears in the appendix. Mr. Wadia in reply made the following speech :—

MY BROTHERS:

I thank you very much for the presentation of the address just read out by you. It is for the first time that I have the pleasure of addressing the members of the Printers' Labour Union. I do not know what actually are the grievances which you want redressed for your own trade, but all I can promise you is that in fighting the cause of the labourers of India your particular difficulties will not be overlooked by me in England. While

I do not know your particular grievances, I am fully aware of all the grievances that you with other trades-people and labourers are suffering. I happen to know something, being connected with a newspaper, about your printing trade. Not only in connection with the *New India* Printing Press, but for the last many years, in fact since 1905, I have had to do with journals and once owned a small Printing Press myself, so that I know what would facilitate your life and work and bring a kind of general improvement in the printing trade as such. The one thing I would advise you in carrying on your work during my absence would be to get as much knowledge as you can possibly obtain with the help of your leaders in the matter of the printing men in Europe and especially in America. The second thing that you should do would be to go from press to press in the City of Madras and get all the members that you can get for this particular Union which you have formed. That is all that I have to say to you to-day. Let me assure you that I will remember your request and will bear in mind that you are doing some useful work for self-progress in the City of Madras, and I hope when I come back I will find your Union good, strong, powerful, wielding an influence for the betterment of our civic and our educational life.

IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Mr. B. P. Wadia left Madras on May 8th, 1919, and arrived in London on June 7th. It is not quite possible to deal in detail with his work in Great Britain and America. In the Appendix will be found matter which will indicate the nature of some of the work in the British Isles.

When in Great Britain, he visited besides various Labour Party organizations in London, the following places :—

Southport, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Letchworth, Bow, Battersea, Norwood, Chelsea, Hove, Preston, Birkenhead, Wigan, Rochdale, Burnley, Bolton, Manchester York, Newcastle, Harrogate, Glasgow (second time) Bath, Cardiff, Bristol, Haywards Heath, Birmingham, Leeds, Bradford, Wellesley.

At each of these places he spoke on the subject of Indian Labour and gained a sympathetic hearing most encouraging for the cause.

GLASGOW TRADE UNION CONGRESS

All that is possible in this volume is to make a passing note of the enthusiasm of the British Trade Union Congress over Mr. Wadia's appeal at their Glasgow session in September 1919. The note of the international unity of labour struck by Mr. Wadia evoked a very hearty response, which manifested in not only an unmistakable but a very remarkable fashion. The cause of Indian Labour gained very much at that Congress.

The British press spoke very sympathetically about Indian Labour conditions referring to Mr. Wadia's speech.

The *Daily Mail* characterized it as " a tremendous reception "; the *Daily Herald* referred to it as a " noble reception"; and the *Morning Post* as a "a great ovation." The *Labour Leader* said " The most striking scene of the week took place when Mr. Wadia concluded an impassioned oration on behalf of the down-trodden workers of India, who have just formed the new Trades

Unions. The whole audience rose as one man when this remarkable speech ended. It is said that Congress has not been moved to such a spontaneous ovation for years." The *Evening Times*, Glasgow, said "he thrilled the meeting as few speakers have done during the week's sitting". The *Daily Record*, Glasgow, referred to "his clear and forceful speech which betrayed no difficulties of expression, and the ovation he received was even greater than that of the popular leaders." The *Glasgow Citizen* said: "The distinction of having raised the Trades Union Congress to a pitch of enthusiasm such as nothing else in the Conference so far had called forth, was gained yesterday afternoon, not by 'Bob' Smillie, or any other 'big guns', but by Mr. B. P. Wadia, an Indian delegate. The Congress was first amazed by his facile use of the English language, there being not a fault either of pronounciation or of construction, and then they became carried away by his moving eloquence. When he finished the Congress members with one accord stood and cheered him again and again. It was a happy thought which prompted the suggestion from the body of the Hall that Mr. Wadia should receive a token of esteem similar to the gifts presented to the fraternal delegates from America and Canada. The proposal was heartily agreed to." The *Westminster Gazette* said: "One of the most arresting speeches of this Congress was that made by Mr. Wadia, an Indian visitor, who is in this country on behalf of the Home Rule for India Movement." The *Daily News* referred to "B. P. Wadia, the Indian delegate who made a tremendous impression on Congress yesterday afternoon, and was by accord to-day decorated with the special gold badge which

is the Congress order of merit." The *Manchester Guardian* said that " Mr. Wadia evoked cheers by his insistence on the common interests of white and coloured labour thoughout the world."

As a result of Mr. Wadia's speech, the Trade Union Congress passed the following rssolution :

" That this Congress learns with great pleasure that the workers of India are taking steps to form Trade Unions to improve their conditions and hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee to send an appeal to all Unions affiliated to the Congress for their financial assistance to our fellow Trade Unionists in India. "

IN AMERICA.

It is not possible to go into full details of the work done at the first International Labour Conference of the League of Nations held at Washington D. C. in November 1919 where Mr. Wadia had the privilege to be present on behalf of Indian labour in company with Mr. N. M. Joshi. Ncr is it possible to narrate work done by Mr. Wadia at several American Labour Centres from New York in the east to Los Angeles in the west. Everywhere he obtained a very good response to his appeals on behalf of the poor of India.

At the following places Mr. Wadia spoke on Indian Labour Problems :—

Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Louis, Denver, Seattle, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Toledo, Cleveland, Buffalo, Rochester, Springfield, Boston, New York.

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

It was an imposing spectacle. Three hundred dele-

gates and advisers from all parts of the world gathered in the fine hall of the Pan-American Union. This noble edifice was erected through the munificence of the late Andrew Carnegie and the contributions of all the American Republics, and dedicated to the cause of Pan-American Peace and Progress.

The four delegates from each country sat together and in front of them was a board with the name of the country which they represented, and its flag. Behind the delegates sat the advisers. On the dais sat the President and Secretary of the Organizing Committee, on the right and left respectively of the Chairman of the Conference, the Secretary of Labour of the United States, the Hon. William B. Wilson. The wall behind him was decorated with the flags of all the countries of those who are original members of the League of Nations. The flag of India is red, with the Union Jack in the corner and the five-pointed Star of India prominently displayed.

The proceedings opened at noon on Wednesday, October 29th and lasted till 29th November. The Conference adopted six Draft Conventions and six Recommendation as under:—

1. The application of the principle of an eight-hour day and forty-eight hour week.

2. The question of preventing or providing against unemployment.

3. The employment of women before and after childbirth.

4. The employment of women during the night.

5. The minimum age of employment of children in industry.

6. The night work of young persons employed in industry.

RECOMMENDATION.

1. Concerning public employment exchanges.

2. Concerning reciprocity of treatment of foreign workers.

3. Concerning the prevention of anthrax.

4. Concerning the prevention of women and children against lead poisoning.

5. Concerning the establishment of Government Health Services.

6. Concerning the application of the Berne Convention of 1906, on the prohibition of the use of white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches.

1. The application of the principle of an eight-hour day and forty-eight hour week

" In British India the principle of a sixty-hour week shall be adopted for all workers in the industries at present covered by the Factory Acts administered by the Government of India in mines, and in such branches of railway work as shall be specified for this purpose by the competent authority. Any modification of this limitation made by the competent authority shall be subject to the provisions of Articles 6 and 7 of this Convention. In other respects the provisions of this Convention shall not appply to India, but further provisions limiting the hours of work in India shall be considered at a future meeting of the General Conference." (Article 10)

2. The question of preventing or providing against unemployment.

The Draft Convention proposes the establishment

of a public employment Bureau and makes it obligatory on the Government to provide statistics about unemployment to the International Labour Office. It also proposes the establishment of a system of free public employment agencies under the control of a central authority.

3. The employment of women before and after childbirth.

The Draft Convention prohibits employment of women in factories 6 weeks before and 6 weeks after childbirth and provides maternity benefits sufficient for the full and healthy maintenance of herself and her child, provided either out of public funds or by a system of insurance.

4. The employment of women during the night.

The Draft Convention prohibits the employment of women during the night, but the Government of India under Article 5 of the Convention may suspend this in respect of any industrial undertaking except factories.

5. The minimum age of employment of children in industry.

This Draft Convention lays down under Article 2 that children under the age of 14 shall not be employed in work, but by Article 6 India is made an exception and children under 12 years of age shall not be employed:

a. In manufactories working with power and employing more than 10 persons.

b. In mines, quarries and other works for the extraction of minerals from the earth.

c. In the transport of passengers of goods or mails by rail or in the handling of goods at docks, quays and wharves but excluding the transport by hand.

6. The night work of young persons employed in industry.

Under this Convention young persons under 18 years of age are not to be employed during the night in any industrial undertaking, but by Article 6 India is made an exception and the age of the young person is reduced from 18 to 14 and industrial undertaking is confined to factories as defined by the Indian Factory Act.

THE 10-HOUR DAY.

The most important of the above 6 Conventions is the first one on the application of the 10-hour day or 60-hour week.

This special concession to the Indian Government was arrived at after a discussion in a specially appointed committee. Article 405 of the Treaty of Peace runs as follows :—

"In framing any recommendation or draft Convention of general application, the conference shall have due regard to those countries in which climatic conditions, the imperfect development of industrial organizations or other special circumstances make the industrial conditions substantially different, and shall suggest the modifications, if any, which it considers may be required to meet the case of such countries."

In pursuance of this Article a special commitee was appointed under the presidency of the Rt. Hon. G. N. Barnes. During the deliberations of that committee Mr. N. M. Joshi on behalf of the Indian Labour put in the following statement.

1. My individual view is that no harm will be done to the industries in India even if the principle of

8 hours a day be introduced there immediately. But I admit this view will be supported neither by the employers nor by the Government, nor by a large volume of public opinion in the country. Therefore for practical considerations I accept temporarily the position that India should be excluded for some period from the application of the principle of 8 hours a day.

2. As regards Article 1 of the proposed convention I think restriction of hours of work may not for some time be applied to all industries, but shall apply to all factories worked with either electricity, steam, water or other mechanical power, and where not less than 10 persons are employed. It shall apply to mines and quarries, railways and tramways. It shall also apply to all Departments of Government and Municipal Service and to the offices of all companies registered under the Indian Companies Act.

3. The working hours of employed persons shall not exceed 10 in one day and 60 hours a week. I am not in favour of the principle of 60 hours a week without fixing a limit for the daily hours of work. Even a day of 10 hours is too long, and it will be detrimental to the health of the worker to employ them for longer hours even if they are compensated by an additional day's rest.

4 I am opposed to allowing overtime except for reasons mentioned in Article (3) *viz.*, the breakdown of any machinery, in which case the time of overwork will be compensated for during the course of a fortnight. The period of 10 hours is too long to admit of any overtime.

Mr. Kershaw on behalf of the Government of India and Mr. Murray on behalf of the Indian employers also put in long statements. Mr. Kershaw's statement gives assurance that the Government of India will "consent

to the principle of a sixty-hour week, and to apply that principle effectively."

Mr. Murray on behalf of the employers suggested that "the whole matter be referred back to India with a recommendation that the Government of India should proceed with its enquiries, and such legislation as may be considered advisable, and report progress to the next Conference."

The report of the Special Committee on India is as under :—

1. The Committee has had the advantage of access to a good deal of the available information about Indian industrial conditions, by means of the official replies of the Indian Government and the statements of the delegates of the Government, the employers, and the workers. But it is clear that that information covers only a relatively small part of the ground, mainly for the reason that in India conditions do not approximate to anything which is known in the western world. The total number of persons in British India employed in organized industrial undertakings, such as factories, mines, and railways, constitutes an insignificant proportion of the while population. Other industries are still almost universally on a small scale, and the predominant industry of India is agriculture.

2. At the same time it appears that such industries as exist in India, especially textiles, and Government and private railway and engineering shops, are quite well organized. It is true that present Indian conditions are not such as to make easy in the immediate future either large scale factory production or the application of western standards in the restriction of working hours.

Nevertheless, in the industries mentioned, something has already been done in both directions. India has had three Factory Laws, each law marking a substantial advance on its predecessor. The Committee has had evidence that the laws have been well administered and are effective.

3. The Factory Law at present covers mainly textiles and certain branches of railway and engineering work, and applies only to establishments in which at least 50 persons are employed, though it is possible, by administrative order (which has often been brought into effect where abuses were suspected) to bring under the law establishments employing 20 persons.

4. The Committee is of opinion that the present Conference can legislate usefully only with regard to large industrial undertakings, such as are already within the scope of the Factory Acts and mines. With regard to these, (i. e. all industries at present under the Factory Acts, mines, and certain branches of railway and iron works), the Committee recommend that the Government of India should be asked to adopt the principle of a 60-hour week.

5. The Committee however recommends the Conference to lay before the Government of India a very urgent request that it should consider two important matters ; first, the possibility of adopting a lower limit for underground work in mines, and secondly, the possibility of adopting in the light of standards accepted in other countries a modified definition of "factory", which would reduce the number of workers required to bring a factory under the scope of the Act. The Committee thinks that it should be possible at a near date to limit the hours of

underground work in mines to 54, or even lower ; and recommends this step to the favourable consideration of the Government of India.

6. With regard to small industries, not coming under the provisions of the Factory Act, the Government of India might be requested to expedite as much as possible the collection of information and statistical data. And as apart from this the Committee understands that inquiries were initiated several months ago relating to the amendment of the Factory Act with a view to bettering the conditions of labour, the Government of India might also be requested to communicate at the earliest possible date, and if possible before the next Conference, to the International Labour Office the results of these inquiries and the proposals of the Government for carrying into effect the tendencies apparent in modern legislation.

7. The Committee therefore recommends the Conference to embody the substance of paragraph 4 of this report in the form of a convention, and to communicate to the Government of India the observations and requests of the remaining paragraphs.

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APPENDIX I

A propaganda note issued to the Labour Party Conference at Southport in June 1919, by Mr. B. P. Wadia, under the heading " Labour in India. "

Textile factories employ workers for twelve hours a day.

Children between the age of 9 and 14 are employed for work for six hours a day.

Housing arrangements are non-existent and even discussions on the problem are meagre and academical.

Many workers live in villages several miles away from the factories employing them, and, therefore, they have to leave home at 4 A. M. and walk to the Mills so as to be at the gate by 5-45 A. M. They leave the Mills at 6 P. M. and reach home merely in time to eat their food and go to bed.

Thus labourers have neither leisure for recreation nor time for sufficient rest.

The twelve-hours working day has one break of 30 minutes. Observations have shown that on account of faulty exit and entrance arrangements a labourer does not get more than 12 to 13 minutes for his food—the rest of the time is spent in getting out and in again into the factories.

Young persons are employed on the shift system—each shift of six hours. The first one from 6 A. M. to 12 noon, and the second from 12 noon to 6 P. M. Like their elders they walk to the factories from adjoining villages and so their working day is of eight hours, which leaves them no time for education.

The sanitary conditions in many factories are primitive and objectionable.

Medical aid even in case of accidents is often not available.

Wages are scandalously low. In Madras an examination has shown that the average pay is 20 to 22/6 per month for a textile factory worker.

Even then the wages due at the end of each month are not paid till the 15th of the following month, and sometimes later.

After years of silent suffering the Indian labourers have begun to organize their forces.

In the City of Madras we have formed separate Unions for the Textile Factory Workers, the Tramwaymen, the Rickshaw Drivers, the Printers and Railway Workshopmen. This work was begun in April, 1918, and already we have about 17,000 members in Madras alone. Labourers in other towns have appealed for help in organizing them similarly.

We appeal for your moral and material support. When you ask for higher wages and better conditions you are met by the cry that the Indian Mill competes against you. When the Indian worker asks for better things he is told that you compete against him. Both you and he suffer because we are divided. The cause of labour is one. Give us your help!

B. P. WADIA,

President,

Madras Labour Union, and representing
Madras Tramwaymen's Union,
Madras Rickshawallas' Union,
Madras Printers' Union and
Madras Railway Workshop Union

and

Fraternal Delegates from the Organized Workers of India to the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress.

Appendix II.

A memorandum on "Labour Problems in India" issued to the Trades Union Congress held at Glasgow in September 1919, by Mr. B. P. Wadia.

Labour conditions in India are exceptional, for in that vast country labour is not organised; it is exploited by the capitalistic class; its interests are not watched by the Government; the working hours are extremely long; the wages are miserably low; the housing problem is in the stage of mere academic and theoretic discussion. The only place where recently an effort has been made to organise labour is the city of Madras, where five Unions have been formed—the Madras Labour Union, Madras Tramwaymen's Union, Madras Rickshawallas' Union, Madras Printers' Union and Madras Railway Workshop Union. I am the President of the first of these and am in Great Britain as a representative of all of them (Sub-Appendix A.) I come here as a fraternal delegate to the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress (Sub-Appendix B.)

Though labour conditions in India are exceptional they do not warrant Indian labour representation being shut out at the International Labour Conference which is to meet at Washington in the course of a few weeks. The tendency of the official policy is to regard Indian labour as subservient to the industrial development of India. Such an attitude may obscure the fact that Indian labour will be allowed to be exploited as hitherto. Capi-

talistic exploitation, in the name of growing Indian Industries, has already taken place, and that ought not to be permitted any longer. The welfare of the Indian labourer should not be sacrificed for the sake of "growing industries" ; the betterment of his lot should not be relegated to a second place, and a primary position given to the improvement and growth of young or new industries.

HOURS.

The last inquiry into factory conditions in India was conducted in 1908, as a result of which the Factories Act was amended in 1911. That Act is now in force. *The Report of the Indian Factory Labour Commission* admits that "in textile factories excessive hours are frequently worked in cotton mills: in all jute mills weavers are employed for excessive hours, " and it makes mention of seventeen and eighteen hours a day in ginning factories (P. 82): twenty to twenty-two hours in rice and flour mills (P. 82), the textile factories of Bombay working " for fourteen hours or more" (P. 82), those in Ahmedabad and Broach working in summer for fourteen hours and more (P. 80), mills in Agra working fifteen and a quarter hours per day in summer, and thirteen and three-quarter hours in winter (P.82), factories in Delhi working "fourteen, and even fourteen and a half hours " (P.82). What was the out-come of the Report ? The Act was amended, and now " no person shall be employed, in any textile factory for more than twelve hours in any one day"(*Indian Factories Act*, Chap. V., para. 28). A textile factory can employ a labourer for twelve hours per day for six days of the week, *i. e.*, seventy-two hours per week. What is the recess in this twelve hours working-day ? The Act provides that half-an-hour's

recess should be given to the worker (Chap. IV., para 21). This thirty minutes period is divided between three functions—going out of the mills, taking a meal and returning to the mills. Careful observations carried on in Madras where arrangements are better than in other Mills (I am referring to the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills.) showed that a man does not get more than twelve to thirteen minutes for his actual meal.

The twelve hours day with its ridiculous thirty minutes recess has another side. The workmen in almost all cases live miles away from factories, and as was rightly pointed out by an I. C. S. officer recently, "from the standpoint of the worker, the time in going to and returning from the factory must be added to the length of his active day." In Bombay, where tram and train services are available, one hour at the least must be added, and I know instances, in Madras, where the distance has to be walked, that labourers have to leave home at 4-30 A. M. to be at the factory gate at 5-45, and do not reach home till 8 p. m.

The result of this excessive long hours system is far reaching. It tells on the efficiency of the work; it produces the phenomenon peculiar to Indian factory labour—*viz.*, loitering; it leads to premature exhaustion; it drives the Indian labourer away from the factory, as "the operative becomes unable to stand the strain of work under present conditions at a comparatively early age." (*Indian Factory Labour Commission Report*, p. 27.) Dr. T. M. Nair, in his Minute of Dissent to the Commission Report characterises the system thus: " A system more likely to bring about degradation of labour is impossible to conceive."

WAGES.

I am in a position to give some detailed figures of payment received by workmen in textile factories, which go to prove the miserably low wages prevalent in India. It may be contended that living in India is cheap; but when the rise in the prices of foodstuffs and clothing material is taken into account (for this see *Rise in Prices*, a Government publication, the result of a careful study by K. B. Dutt, I. C. S.), when a personal inquiry into the lives of the workmen is made, and when we see the hovels they live in, the food they eat, the clothes they wear, and remember that they are *always in debt*, which is ever-increasing, we cannot but come to the inevitahle conclusion that the scale of wages is scandalously low and is absolutely inadequate to meet the demands of sheer existence at the present time. It is said that the standard of living of the Indian workman is low. It is necessary to remember in this connection that the wage allowed him leads to malnutrition and that the latter has to be remedied before a better standard of living, housing, clothing, &c., can be thought of. The Indian labourer may be addicted to living cheaply; but the most frugal temperament would not choose malnutrition and all its consequences, for the sake of cheap living; and further, what about the debt the labourer is constantly incurring? Low wages compel him to borrow at high rates of interest, and with the help of his miserable earnings plus his borrowed money he manages to exist. Life in dingy hovel on scanty food shows the courage and patience of the Indian labourer. Malnutrition is provable, and all I need to do is to copy the following table, which shows

that prisoners in Indian jails are better nourished than the Indian operatives. This explains the remark of the manager of a big Nagpur factory that "those accustomed to mill life regard it as worse than jail life." (*Indian Factory Labour Commission Report*, p. 90.)

STATEMENT SHOWING THE AVERAGE WEIGHTS OF PRISONERS AND OF MILL OPERATIVES.*

Province.	Number of prisoners weighed	Average weight in lbs.	Number of operatives other than weavers weighed	Average weight in lbs.	Number of weavers weighed	Average weight in lbs.	REMARKS.
Bombay... ...	2,656	112-12	735	102-093	288	104-810	
Central Provinces	1,746	110-45	100	100-92	52	107	
Bengal... ...	6,834	106-187	140	107-989	32	106-25	Average weight of prisoners in the United Provinces, 115·8 lbs.
Eastern Bengal and Assam ...	3,046	110-846	20	108	...	...	
Burma	6,540	120-51	42	117-142	...	...	Average weight of prisoners in the Rajahmundry Central Jail Madras, generally, 114·38 lbs.
Madras.	7,818	114-38	104	103-634	20	98	
United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.	9,680	115-03	117	107-016	200	110-705	
Punjab	5,998	120-42	115	113-808	...	...	

* *Indian Factory Labour Commission Report*, APPENDIX C.

NOTE.—In Bengal probably the most accurate comparison is with prisoners in the United Provinces; in Burma with prisoners in Madras generally, and more particularly with prisioners in the Rajahmundry Central Jail, which is situate in the tract from which the majority of the Madras labourers in Burma are recruited.

The problem of wages was not examined by the Factory Commission of 1908. The Member of the Indian Civil Service quoted above says, "Labour may be cheap, but life is not," and it is not difficult to prove that India suffers, in more ways than one, on account of the scandalous wages paid to the labourer; this happens when all the time the capitalists are hoarding wealth—mill agents getting their handsome commissions, and shareholders their big dividends.

To substantiate these general remarks I give below a few typical figures which can tell their tale more eloquently than my words. Take these earnings of workers in the Cotton Mills of Bombay, of the Jute Mills of Bengal, of the Leather Works of Cawnpore, etc., and compare them with wages of Lancashire and Dundee and other factories in the United Kingdom generally.

Specimen Wages in the Cotton Mills of Bombay:—

	£.	s.	d.	
Drawer (card room) ...	1	11	2	per month.
Reeler ...	1	3	0	
Warper ...	2	14	0	
Rover ...	1	12	1	
Doffer (card room) ...	0	16	10	
Weaver ...	3	2	7	

Wages are paid monthly, with two to three weeks in arrears.

These sample rates were prevalent in Bombay in 1918, and include War Bonus. Again, these rates are in Bombay, and wages are higher there than in other

places. Against this let me give a few items from the Bombay Exchange List for June, 1919.

	Dividend.		Share Value. Original.	Present.
Ahmedabad advance ...	40	per cent. ...	500 ...	1,410
Kasturchand ...	40	,, ...	500 ...	1,000
Mathradas ...	40	,, ...	500 ...	1,100
Crescent	50	,, ...	100 ...	251
Madhowji	50	,, ...	500 ...	2,317
Fazalbhai	56	,, ...	250 ...	840
Bombay Dyeing ...	70	,, ...	250 ...	1,580
Central India ...	80	,, ...	500 ...	2,610
Sholapur	100	,, ...	1,000 ...	9,500
Khatau	120	,, ...	1,000 ...	3,700

The dividends do not indicate total nett profits; large reserves are carried forward.

Specimen Wages in Jute Mills:—

	£.	s.	d.	
Carders	0	12	0	per month.
Rovers	0	16	0	per month.
Spinners	0	19	8	per month.
Shifters	0	14	8	per month.
Winders ...	1	4	0	per month.
Beamers	1	9	4	per month.
Weavers	1	16	0	per month.
Maistries	2	0	0	per month.
Coolies	0	17	4	per month.

Wages are paid weekly, with one week in arrears.

In 1916-17 there were seventy-one mills running with 39,404 looms, employing 260,199 persons, with a paid-up capital, including debentures, but excluding reserves, amounting to two and a quarter million pounds sterling. The annual turnout is 1,000,000 tons of raw material.

The annual average value of the jute trade to Bengal has been computed at £. 40,000,000 at pre-war rate of exchange. In this connection the following,

taken from the *Financier* of August 7, 1918, will be found instructive: "Many commodities are scarce now-a-days through the want of tonnage to bring them from foreign countries. A further contributive cause is the dearth of bags, in which grain, sugar, etc., are shipped; the price of jute sacks has accordingly risen to unknown heights. Hence the prosperity of the Indian jute companies, three of which, the Victoria, Titaghur, and Samnugger, have doubled their dividend to 20 per cent. for the past year, against 10 per cent. for 1916. The shares are tightly held in Dundee.

Specimen Wages in the Tanneries and Leather Works of Cawnpore:—

	£.	s.	d.	
Un-hairers and fleshers ...	0	16	0	per month.
Scourers and setters	0	16	0	
Slicker whiteners	1	1	4	
Machine operators	1	8	8	

Specimen Wages to Workman in Coal Mines:—

The average daily wage per head is $7\frac{1}{2}$ *d.*

The annual raisings per head of labour employed below ground for all India 169·4 tons.

In reference to wages must be mentioned some ways devised to throw dust in the eyes of the unwary. Some manufacturers have started what they call a gratuity fund. Mr. M.C. Sitaraman, a retired weaving master of the Carnatic Mills of Madras, where this "Gratuity Fund" is worked, has well described its mode:

The Gratuity Fund for women is a very ingenious device for securing constant and steady labour. It has its merits as well as its faults. A labourer after ten years of satisfactory and *continuous* service gets between 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. of his total wages. On the other hand, it turns a workman into an avaricious and spiritless slave of the system. Desirous of securing the gratuity fund, a workman gradually loses his self-respect.

puts up with treatments which under ordinary circumstances he would have revolted from, and invariably becomes a mere beast to dance to the tunes and insolent whims of his arbitrary superior in the department. It emasculates the workman and emboldens the foreman to stretch the exercise of his arbitrary power to the vanishing limit. Here I may mention a case that I know which has a touch of tragedy in its committal. A workman stole a lea (120 yds,) of red yarn to make a waist thread. He was found out at the gate, brought to the manager, who, after referring to the register, dismissed him without the least concern on his part. Usually stealing of a trivial nature is punished by the same manager by a fine of a rupee or two. This particular workman had faithfully served nine years and eight months and he was to get as his gratuity a lump sum of Rs. 150 (£ 10) in another four months. The man, brokenhearted, went home as if to his own funeral. I wish that workmen who have put in more than five years of service be treated more generously than in the above case by the mill authorities.

CAPACITY.

The inefficiency of the Indian workman is often adduced as the cause of low wages. The factory system in India is already fifty years old, and it is inconceivable that the Indian workman has made no progress. "India is the Mother Country of the textile industry and up to the time of Arkwright possessed the monopoly of fine yarns"; outside experts like Mr. James Platt and Mr. Henry Lee are of opinion that "in no country on earth, except in Lancashire, do the operatives possess such a natural leaning to the textile industry as in India"; Dr. G. Von Schultze-Gævernitz, a German expert, said in 1895 that the Indian labourer "does not stand far behind the German"—that was twenty-five years ago. Dr. Nair in his Minute of Dissent to the *Report of the Indian Factory Labour Commission* says :—

And at the present time, according to the very careful calcuations made by Mr. Simpson, of Messrs. Binny and Co., of Madras, a cotton mill in Madras with 35,000 ring spindles, 800 looms, average count 16s., working 67½ hours a week, would employ 2,622 operatives all told. Whereas for a similar mill in Lancashire, working 54½ hours a week, the total number of hands required would be 982, which works out a proportion of 2.62 Indian hands to 1 English hand. And if we also consider that the average monthly wage of a Lancashire operative will be about Rs. 60 (£4), and the average monthly wage of a Madras operative is Rs. 15 (£1), it is clear that *for the same money the Indian millowner gets nearly double the work that an English millowner does.* . . . Before condemning the Indian operative as inefficient and incapable of improvement he ought to be given a fair hearing. In a memorial submitted to His Excellency the Marquis of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General of India in 1883, by the mill operatives of Bombay, it was stated that " it has been said to the detriment of your petitioner that an Indian mill operative is not as hard-working as his brother workman in England, and that a mill operative in England does the work of three men employed on the same work in an Indian Mill. The real cause of this, your Lordship's petitioners submit, is the bad machinery and the bad raw materials used in the mills. The breakage in the thread is so continuous here on account of the bad quality of the cotton that mill owners are compelled to employ more men. As the effect of the long hours has to be considered before judging of the idle habits of the Indian operatives, so the quality of the raw material they have to handle has to be taken into consideration before the extent of their skilfulness or otherwise is determined.

It is also very necessary to point out that the so-called inefficiency of the Indian workman is rooted in a diseased body, and on " the incessant strain on his nerves amidst the din and noise of machinery in the stuffy atmosphere of the factory." Major F. Norman White, M.D., I. M. S., Sanitary Commissioner with the Government of India, writes: "A large part of the relative ineffi-

ciency of the Indian labour is due to removable pathological causes. " (*Indian Industral Commission Report, Appendices to the Report*, Appendix L. p. 164). He makes a pertinent remark and I quote it here with a request that it may be considered in the light of all its implications: "Had the large employer of labour a plentiful supply of really healthy material to start with, he would still be under an obligation to secure for his operatives an environment above reproach; how much greater is the present need for hygienic environment, when in most cases cure has to precede the conservation of health?" (*Ibid.* P. 160). One more quotation from this expert is necessary as it is an important deduction relating to the subject in hand: "All are agreed that the organised labour of India [he means factory labour, not labour organised in trade unions or labour centres] is relatively inefficient, and that the wage earning capacity is low. It is difficult to assess the importance of disease as a contributory cause of this state of affairs." (*Ibid.* P. 160).

Health and Sanitation.

Progressive sanitation is not a feature of the official programme. The *Indian Labour Factory Commission Report* records how " one witness of long practical experience stated that any man would feel exhausted even if he merely sat in a chair in some of the workrooms for eight or nine hours, the atmosphere was so foul." Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, an eminent physician and publicist of Bombay, said to the Commission that there was physical deterioration among the millhands, and was careful enough to point out that it is due to bad

ventilation in the mills" (p. 18). Doctor Chavan, a medical man of Ratnagiri, the district from which a large number of mill operatives come to Bombay, and one who has a large practice among them, is of opinion that "the mill operatives suffer to a very large extent from phthisis and dyspepsia" (p. 87). The hovels in which they are compelled to live, the malnutrition which follows on low earnings, the premature exhaustion caused by long hours necessitate extraordinary sanitary facilities; but the Government of India are very backward in the matter of sanitation, and the necessity of special factory sanitation has not yet occurred to them. The recently published *Indian Industrial Commission Report* includes among its contents a paper on "Industrial Development and Public Health" by the Sanitary Commissioner with the Governmenment of India, in which the expert says that "the subject of industrial hygiene has received remarkably little attention in India, until quite recent times and to-day its importance is not fully recognised in any part of the country". (Appendix I., p. 159).

EDUCATION.

Much has been said of the illiteracy of the Indian labourer. It is true that the average Indian labourer is not able to read or write. He and his educated countrymen have for many years demanded that primary education should be made free and compulsory, but the Government of India have failed to respond to that demand. In fact one of the strongest arguments for the universal demand in India for Home Rule is the extremely backward educational policy of the present inefficient administration. However, it must be noted that

the masses in India—and among them are the factory labourers—have a culture of their own. Their power of understanding political and economic issues and suggesting proper remedies in a practical manner is well known to those who have worked for and with them. Their political instincts are clear and strong. Their ability to organise themselves was recently manifested in the formation of the trade unions in Madras referred to above; and it will be an agreeable surprise to lovers of labour in Great Britain to note that a few months ago in Bombay a general strike of textile workers was declared and maintained for several days without any trade union organisation in existence there. That strike involved some 70,000 labourers. This instance is given to show that Indian labourers do possess the capacity to combine and organise effectively.

Lack of education, however, prevails. A few employers have opened schools for the children of their employees. Much is made by clever capitalists of such institutions, and instances are not wanting where the Government have given prominence to such ventures. But attention must be drawn to the important fact that it is one of the devices to enslave labour. To quote a retired weaving-master, Mr. M. C. Sitaraman, of the Carnatic Mills at Madras: "The school, general and technical in character, is the best part of the whole affair —the best part of the institute from the manufacturers point of view This pays him in rupees, annas. pies. This school trains up boys to become intelligent and skilled labourers and cooly clerks. This serves as a strong link of connection as well between the employers and the employees even under strained relationship." Even the

Indian Industrial Commission Report, published a few months ago, disposes of the whole problem in two short paragraphs under the heading "Education of Factory Children." What hope is there, then for the future?

Housing.

As in the matter of education the problem of housing has not attracted very serious attention from the Government. Some manufacturers have started schools for the children of their employees, so others have put up chawls and houses for them. They have done this to secure some permanence in the fluctuating Indian labour, and as the *Indian Industrial Commission Report* says, "in such cases employers have often found it impossible to obtain labour without providing accommodation;" and again, "the more enlightened factory owner has found it advisable to provide accommodation on an increasing scale recognising that, though the rent which he can obtain will not pay him more than a trifling percentage on his outlay, the mill which houses its labourers best will command the pick of the labour market, especially in the case of such a fluid labour force as that on which the textile factories rely" (p. 181).

The actual conditions under which the labourers live are indescribable. In the City of Bombay—Urbs Prima in Indis—744,000 working men are tenanted in one-roomed houses; the room is generally 8 feet by 10 feet, and a death rate of 60 per 1,000 is known to prevail.

The Moral Issue.

In dealing with the problems of education, housing, gratuity fund, etc., I may have appeared to be unappreciative of the manufacturers who have tried to run schools

or build houses or start gratuity funds. The factor to be borne in mind in this connection is the innate culture of the Indian labourer, which loathes the idea of slavery in any shape or form. The Indian labourers want to have schools for their children, houses for themselves, better wages and shorter hours—all as a matter of right and justice. The efforts on the part of the employers to patronize the labourers are seen as fetters of slavery, albeit golden fetters instead of iron ones. I have not referred to the iron fetters of personal abuse, kicking and other brutal practices that still prevail on plantations and in factories. The Madras Labour Union is trying to put a stop to them by legal means. The new spirit is in evidence among Indian labourers who will not tolerate such brutalities any more; but it is well to recognise that even the above-named golden fetters are resented and the Indian labourer feels that he is not only a "hand," but also that he has a head and a heart, and aspires to come into his own.

NON-FACTORY LABOUR.

While there is a semblance of factory legislation—*nam ke vaste*, for the sake of the name, as we say in India—labour outside the factory has not even that much of protection. Agricultural labour, on plantations and other places, has its own untold woes. The conditions in the mine settlements —*e. g.*, Kolar goldfield—are not easily describable. Let me speak of the large body of clerks in shops—especially shops in the wholesale Indian markets. There is no Shops Closing Act to limit the duration of their working day; there is no shop-Inspector; the twelve-hour day of the factory labourer does not apply to the shop-worker; they are

"free to work" as long as they please, or, rather, as long as their benevolent masters like; they have no Sunday as a weekly holiday. Besides the occasional festivals—a few days in the year—only once a month on each new moon day, the bazaars are closed. The Indian bazaar does not recognise the value or necessity of a weekly day of rest. The bazaar opens early in the morning and does not close till very late at night. The European shops and Indian shops managed on European lines have fixed hours of work and Sunday as holiday, but Indian markets, with their thousands upon thousands of employees, have excessive hours without the weekly rest on Sundays. The wages of these shop employees are scandalously low and their prospects poor. The average man begins at £1 per month, and unless he proves to be exceptionally able he has no hopes of rising above £4 per month, or so, at the end of his career. He only lives on in the hope of a partnership or of setting up an independent business some day.

Lest it be understood that the capitalistic public is the only culprit in this matter, let it be made clear that Government sets them a good example. The Government is as much an exploiter of non-factory labour as any merchant-prince or capitalistic concern. Take Post Office wages and see the rise the Government has worked in that department in the course of nearly half a century:

1875—Wages ran between 5s. 6d, to 9s. 6d. per month.

1915—Wages ran between 8*s*. 6*d*. to 10s. *3d*. per month.

I have purposely taken the Postal Department because

of an incident to which I wish to draw the very pertinent attention of the Labourites and Trade Unionists everywhere. Here it is :—

There was recently a postal strike in Calcutta, and the grievances of the postmen, as is generally the case with labour troubles, related to the question of improvement in their pay. The matter, however, went to the Police-Court, and six of the "ringleaders" in the strike were sentenced to three weeks rigorous imprisonment each, and eight others to a fine of Rs. 20 each, or in default, to ten days' rigorous imprisonment. Dealing with this particular matter a "Disgusted Briton" writes to the *Statesman* of Calcutta.

All of these men were striking as a method of protest against that "graded salary of Rs. 15 rising to Rs. 25" (£1 to £.1, 13s. 4d. per month), which they hold to be insufficient to maintain themselves and their families, and which is below the rates paid to men in similar positions in Bombay. If the law obtaining in India permits the infliction of sentences of imprisonment for such so-called "offences" as these, surely it is about time the law was altered. If the sentences were permissible under the Defence of India Act [equivalent to D.O.R.A.], they would seem a gross misuse of power. It is easy, on Rs. 1000 (£ 66 13s. 4d.) a month or over, to damn these poor men for causing us inconvenience ; it is shameful to misuse our powers to imprison them. The rise in the cost of living in Calcutta is known to all and when these men follow the countless precedents of the United Kingdom to endeavour to better their condition we give them an answer that not only smacks of disgruntled despotism, but damns British justice, whatever the law may be.

CONCLUSION.

The Government of India is an autocracy. The Indian Reforms under discussion in Parliament plainly indicate that the present machinery of autocracy will be maintained. The ears of autocracy are always deaf to

the groans of the sufferer. The voice of the poor factory labourer will not even reach those ears, for it will be drowned amid the droning of the machinery of the rich capitalist, and the latter is the friend of the Government. There is a serious attempt to establish a living brotherhood of the labourers of the world, and the Indian labourers fondly look to organised labour in the United Kingdom to champion their cause. As their spokesman, on their behalf, I am putting forward this condensed statement. I appeal to those who hold the cause of Labour and Trade Unionism sacred, to stretch their hands of fellowship to their comrades in India. Remember the Cause of Labour is one.

SUB-APPENDIX A.

To B. P. Wadia, Esq., President, the Madras Labour Union.

Beloved Sir,—

We, the members of the Madras Labour Union, beg to express our gratitude to you for having consented to proceed to England to place our grievances before the British Nation.

We request you to represent us before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, and the Secretary to the Labour Party; and enlist their sympathies to our cause.

You are thoroughly acquainted with our various grievances, and we have also given to you a memorandum explaining them, which we request you to publish widely for the information of the British people.

We pray God that He may afford you a safe and happy journey to England, a sucessful stay there, and an early return to our midst.

We remain,

Yours fraternally.

THE MEMBERS OF THE MADRAS LABOUR UNION.

Madras, 3rd May, 1919.

To B. P. Wadia Esq., President, the Madras Labour Union.

Beloved Sir,—

On the eve of your departure to England to work for the Indian labour movement, we, the Members of the Madras Tramwaymen's Union, desire, to express our gratitude to you for your work among us. You brought

our Union into existence and looked after it in the early days of its struggles, and we owe our present consolidated position greatly to you.

We request you to represent us before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Secretary of the Labour Party, and enlist their support to our cause.

You are fully acquainted with our various difficulties and grievances which we in most cases share with our countrymen and we would request you to bring them thoroughly to the notice of the British Democracy.

We wish you a safe and happy journey to England, a successful stay there, and an early return to our midst.

We remain,

Yours affectionately.

THE MEMBERS OF THE MADRAS TRAMWAYMEN'S UNION.

Madras, 6th May, 1919.

To B. P. Wadia, Esq., President, the Madras Labour Union.

Respected Sir,—

We, the Members of the Rickshawalla's Union, beg to put on record your services on our behalf. At a time of great distress you came to our rescue and organised us and enabled us to form a Union. Our coming together has been of great help to us, and what little improvement we have attained is to a great extent due to you.

You are going to Great Britain, and we want to take this opportunity of requesting you to represent our

Union before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Secretary of the Labour Party, and enlist their support to our cause.

' We wish you a pleasant and safe voyage, a successful stay abroad, and a safe return to our Motherland.

We remain, Yours fraternally,

THE MEMBERS OF THE RICKSHAWALLA'S UNION,
Madras, 6th May, 1919.

To B. P. Wadia, Esq., President, the Madras Labour Union.

Beloved Sir,—

On the eve of your departure to England, to represent the grievances of Indian Labourers before the British Democracy. we, the members of the Madras Printing Press Labour Union, beg to approach you with the request that you may be pleased to use your influence to improve the conditions of Printing Press Labourers of Madras as well, with which you are thoroughly acquainted.

We request you to represent us before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Secretary to the Labour Party, and enlist their sympathies to our case.

We pray God that He may afford you a safe and happy voyage to England, a successful stay there, and an early return to our midst. We remain,

Yours faithfully,

THE MEMBERS OF THE MADRAS PRINTING PRESS LABOUR UNION. Madras, 7th May, 1919.

To B. P. Wadia, Esq., President. the Madras Labour Union.

Beloved Sir,—

We, the Members of the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Workshop Union, on the eve of your departure to England to plead the cause of the poor Indian Labourers before the British Democracy, beg to approach you with the request that you may be pleased to use your greatest influence to improve the conditions of the poor labourers in India, with which you are thoroughly acquainted.

We request you to represent us before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Secretary to the Labour Party, and enlist their sympathies to our cause.

We pray God that He may afford you a safe and happy voyage to England, a successful stay there, and an early return to our midst.

We remain, Yours affectionately,

THE MEMBERS OF THE M. & S. M. RY. WORKSHOP UNION.

Madras, 7th May, 1919.

SUB-APPENDIX B.

The following letter was sent to the Rt. Hon. Charles Bowerman, M. P., the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, and to the Rt. Hon. Arthur Henderson, Secretary of the Labour Party.

The Madras Labour Union,
Perembur Barracks, Gate Road.

Dear Sir and Brother,—

The working masses of the Dominion of India are at last awakening from their slumber. The toilers are organising so that they may be able to control their lives even as their brethren in Great Britain have done. In Madras the first Labour Unions have been formed, and already much good has resulted because the workers have commenced to learn the value of combination.

But we are young, and have much to learn, and we desire help from our elder brothers in Great Britain. We have therefore sent our President, Mr. B. P. Wadia, over the seas to ask for your help and advice. We feel that we shall not appeal to you in vain.

We have noticed that when your Annual Congress meets there are fraternal delegates present from other parts of the British Commonwealth. We know that you welcome the representatives from Canada, and that your heart goes out to your brothers in that Great Dominion. We ask you to receive at your Congress this year our Brother Wadia as the first fraternal delegate from the toiling masses of the Dominion of India. You have declared that you are working for a great brotherhood of the working class without distinction of creed or colour, and we feel sure therefore that

you will welcome our Brother Wadia and will receive him as our fraternal delegate from the first Trade Union in India.

Conveying to you the greetings of the masses of Indian workmen, knowing now for the first time 'the joys of co-operating together for the uplifting of the working people, and trusting to receive your great assistance.

In the name of the Indian workmen, we salute you,

President,
Vice-President,
Treasurer,
Secretary,
THE MADRAS LABOUR UNION.

APPENDIX III.

A Statement submitted by Mr. B. P. Wadia to the Joint Committee of the two Houses of Parliament on Indian Reforms presided over by Lord Selborne on behalf of Indian Labour, on August 12th 1919.

Labour in India may be divided into three classes: (1) Agricultural, including that on plantations; (2) Mining; (3) Factory. I am fairly familiar with the bad conditions from which labour in India in all these industries suffers, but my intimate experience is related to Factory Labour in Madras. I am the President of the Madras Labour Union, formed in Madras on the 27th April, 1918. This Union has already had an interesting career; it has had to struggle not only to grow, but even to exist, and has survived two lock-outs on the part of certain employers. Since then several other Unions have been established in the city of Madras. The Madras Tramwaymen's Union has emerged successfully out of two strikes; the Rickshawallah's Union came into existence in the midst of a strike; the remaining two, the Printers and the Railway workshops Unions were the last to be formed. At Negapatam a strong Union of Railwaymen has been formed and is rooted in firm ground. I have had the honour and privilege to initiate and organise this work in India and from Bombay, Calcutta, Cawnpore, and Luckonw I have received invitations from working men to visit their cities and organise unions. The pressure of public work in hand has made it impossible for me to visit them, but I am planning to organise them on my return to India.

On account of various causes labour troubles have been prevalent in India for many months; the strained

economic conditions and the great rise in prices have been the main causes of this unrest. The forces let loose by the War and the Russian Revolution have to a certain extent widened and coloured the political outlook of the Indian labourer. For many weary years his patience has been heavily taxed, and he has been on the look-out for means to improve his lot. Excessive hours, low wages, premature exhaustion due to malnutrition, lack of education for himself and his children, absence of any housing arrangements, and of general sanitary conditions, and the prevalence of apathy on the part of the authorities and the employers have made the Indian labourer restless. The Indian Factories Act was passed in 1881; during nearly 40 years twice only has that Act been amended. In September, 1890, an Indian Factory Commission was appointed, and again in 1908 the Indian Labour Commission went round. The reports of these Commissions led to the amending of the Factory Act, and the last occasion on which this was done was in 1911. The law now obtains as it was amended in 1911. This law enables an employer to engage labourers for 12 hours per day on six days in the week—*i. e.*, 72 hours per week. Women are allowed be employed for 11 hours per day. Young persons—*i.e.*, boys and girls of 9 to 14 years of age—are employed for six hours per day; generally two shifts are used in textile factories. The long day of 12 hours has the ridiculously small break of 30 minutes in the middle of it. This 12-hour day lengthens into 13 or 14, or even more, as was recently pointed out by an able Indian Civil Servant: "From the standpoint of the worker, the time taken in going to and returning from the factory

must be added to the length of his active day, which cannot then be less than 13 hours."

In the matter of wages the law is dumb. In the matter of sanitation and factory inspection it speaks in halting tones, and those who have practical experience know how superficial is the actual inspection, and how ineffective really in bettering the lot of the labourer.

Thus it will be perceived that the record of the administration in improving and bettering the condition of the factory labourer is not a satisfactory one. This point is not only of academic interest, but becomes a matter of urgent practical importance when we see that the Report of the Functions Committee makes the "settlement of labour disputes" and the "welfare of labour, including provident funds, industrial insurance (general, health and accident) and housing" reserved subjects. I do not quite understand why the somewhat peculiar arrangement detailed below is resorted to in that Report. If we refer to p. 26 of the Functions Committee Report and look at items 24 and 25, and then turn to p. 46 and look at serial No. 15, we find that No. 24, "development of Industries, including industrial research and technical education," is a transferred subject, in all provinces, while No. 25, "Industrial matters included under the following heads:

(a) Factories.,
(b) Settlement of labour disputes,
(c) Electricity,
(d) Boilers,
(e) Gas,
(f) Smoke nuisance, and
(g) Walfare of labour, including provident funds, industrial insurance (general, health and accident) and housing"

are reserved in all provinces.

This is the first point which I respectfully submit for consideration to the Joint Committee. I would strongly urge that the whole of No. 25 of the Provincial subjects (Functions Report, p. 26) should be transferred. Of the seven items included in No. 25, (*a*) (*b*) (*c*) (*d*) are made "subject to Indian legislation": while I see the point of (*a*) factories, (*c*) electricity, and (*d*) boilers being made subject to Indian Legislation for the sake of obtaining uniformity, I fail to see why (*b*) settlement of labour disputes should be so treated. This is actually to sow the seed of future discord, and I think it my duty to strike a note of warning. Trade Unionism is bound to grow fast in India; the settlement of labour disputes will be claimed as one of their rights by the Trade Unions on behalf of the labourer, and if it is in the hand of Government, it will bring the Unions into conflict with Government and will inevitably lead the labourers to regard the Government as on the side of the employers. The Government should limit its work to the creation of permanent Boards of Arbitration to which labour disputes can be referred, on lines similar to a Labour Board suggested by some of us last October for Madras.

Presently we shall require in India some kind of legislation for the recognition of Trade Unions and other labour organisations. Why should a start not be made now, by transferring the whole of item No. 25 and making the popular half of the provincial diarchical government responsible for the entire subject of the development of industries—which is recommended to be a transferred subject (with the exception of large industries claimed by the Government of India)—and the

management of industrial matters, including the most important item (g) welfare of labour? It is my considered opinion that Indian ministers will be better fitted to carry out adequate factory reforms than the official executive. Anyway, the past record of the administration does not inspire hope or confidence in their capacity or zeal for bettering the lot of the misused labourer. Therefore, with all the force I can command I respectfully urge that item No. 25 of the provincial subjects should not be reserved but should be transferred.

This naturally brings us to the question of Indian Labour properly and adequately influencing the legislatures. So far back as 1911 Mr. E. S. Montagu, speaking on the Indian Budget in the House of Commons, said:—

> The leaders of Indian opinion must set their faces against the degradation of labour, and they need to be specially vigilant because India's working classes, besides being themselves unorganised, are not directly represented on the Legislative Councils, whose Indian members come almost exclusively from the landlord and capitalistic classes.

I have only quoted one sentence, but I beg to draw the attention of the Committee to the whole passage in Mr. Montagu's speech.

It is true that in the past non-official members of Legislative Councils have been mostly landlords or capitalists or lawyers who did not familiarise themselves with the difficulties and complexities of the life and work of the Indian labourer. I am not forgetting such men as Gopal Krishna Gokhale of the Imperial Council or Dewan Bahadur P. Kesava Pillai of the Provincial, who have on more than one occasion championed the cause of the poor. But how are we going to remedy the evils of the past?

In the Bill before us I find no attempt made to introduce any measure of reform which will give the labourer any voice in safeguarding his own interests; in no way can he better his own conditions; he will have to rely, as in the past, on the goodwill of others, be they foreigners or be they his own countrymen; he has been exploited in the past and will continue to be so exploited. But what is worse, the people who exploit him are coming into greater power. Take Madras—the Franchise Committee recommend a Provincial Council of 120, of which 13 are unalloyed capitalistic seats. A factory manager, a shop-owner, a planter, can not only vote but get elected from his Chamber of Commerce, his Trades Association, his Planters Association. Capitalists will form a powerful element in the Provincial Council; and under the system of franchise recommended by the Southborough Committee, the labouring classes will not be able to influence the election. I am speaking specially with reference to the factory labourer, and Bombay affords a better example; the Millowners' Association returns a member, but no labourers' association exists. Commerce and Industry have eight seats—excluding landholders' seats—and not a single seat is made available for the representative of labour. I will grant at once that labour organisations do not exist to any great extent; but is that sufficient reason for allowing the exploitation of Indian labour? Is there no way to bring the Indian labourer into power? I maintain that the Indian labourer's interests must be safeguarded, and that the process of safeguarding them must be put into his own hands and into no one else's. I beg to submit that the masses in India—and among them are the factory

labourers—have a culture of their own. Their power of understanding political and economical issues and suggesting proper remedies in a practical manner is well known to those who have worked for and with them. Their political instincts are clear and strong. The factor to be borne in mind is that the Indian labourer loathes the idea of slavery in any shape or form. The Indian labourers want to have schools for their children, houses for themselves, better wages and shorter hours—all as a matter of right and justice. The efforts on the part of the employers or the Government to patronise the labourers are seen as fetters of slavery, albeit golden fetters instead of iron ones. This new spirit is in evidence among Indian labourers, and it is well to recognise that even the golden fetters are resented and the Indian labourer feels that he is not only a "hand," but also that he has a head and a heart, and aspires to come into his own.

Now, how is this to be done? What weapon can the Joint Committee put into the hands of the labourer to defend himself? The only adequate means that I can suggest is the vote. Enable the Indian labourer to send his own representatives to the Provincial Councils; let all matters relating to his welfare and betterment be in the hands of responsible elected representatives who have the confidence of the labourer. If my suggestion made above that all Industrial matters, including the welfare of labour, be transferred to the popular half of the future provincial administration is given effect to, we shall be on the right way to the solution and we immediately have to consider the enfranchisement of Indian labour.

I have carefully studied the problem of Franchise in the Madras Presidency. I have the honour to belong to a small Society of careful researchers in the city of Madras, who, after painstaking investigations, have embodied the results of their study in a 60-page volume of royal 8vo. size. I am referring to the Transaction of the Neo-Fabian Society on *The Problem of Franchise in the Madras Presidency*, and I beg to draw the attention of the Committee to that publication.* In drawing up our Neo-Fabian Scheme, we kept in mind the Labourer, and it will serve my purpose to give the qualifications for voters purposed by us.

(1) All those who pay the income-tax, or the 'professional tax'

(2) Graduates of all Indian and foreign Universities recognised by their respective Governments.

(3) Any person paying land revenue directly.

(4) Occupants of houses and premises of the annual rental value of Rs. 48 in municipal areas and Rs. 24 in non-municipal areas.

(5) Tenants of Zamindari and Raiyatwari holdings paying Rs. 10 rental.

As will be seen from pp. 40-41 the people thus enfranchised will be about four millions in the Madras Presidency. This may sound appalling in view of the Franchise Committee's 542,000 total electors, but with due deference to that body, I may point out that it tried to please a few somewhat obstinate and retrogressive Madras officials and did not view the problem from a

* I hope I shall not be considered as transgressing my province as a witness before this Committee if I also venture to draw their attention to another Transaction of the Society on *Problems of Reform in the Government of India* which throws light on the thorny subjects of the Indian Legislative Assembly, the Council of State and Electoral Methods.

really broad point of view in the light of the actual experience of other countries of the world in this respect. Also, I think the difficulties of election arrangements are overrated.

However, observing the way in which the reforms are shaping themselves, I regretfully abandon the 4 million voters for Madras, and in advocating enfranchisment for Indian Factory Labour, I beg leave to put before this Joint Committee two suggestions. My aim is to gain for the factory labourer direct influence in the legislature. My first suggestion gives him power, and a really suitable environment for political education ; the second suggestion does this in a less effective manner. Both these suggestions are very bare outlines, and details will have to be filled in after further consideration.

I have appended to this statement a table showing the number of labourers employed in large industrial establishments, both governmental and private. From this it will be seen that some 950,000 Indians work in such factories. The total number of workers in all industrial establishments is about 17,515,250. Both my suggestions endeavour to bring on the electoral roll some at least of the emlpoyees in large industrial establishments.

I

I propose that all labourers working in factories and earning a particular wage should be given the vote The wage may differ in different provinces. For Madras, I should suggest that every labourer earning Rs. 15 per month in any large factory should be given the vote. In Bombay and Calcutta the figure will have to be higher. To members of this Committee who may not be fully conversant with Indian labour conditions

this figure of Rs. 15 per month may appear very low. May I draw their attention to the following figures taken from the Indian Industrial Commission Report:—

Specimen Wages of Calcutta Jute Mill Operatives in June, 1918, in Rupees per mensem:—

Carders	... 9	Beamers	... 22
Rovers	... 12	Weavers	... 27
Spinners	... 15¾	Mastries.	... 30
Shifters	... 11	Coolies	... 13
Winders.	18		

Specimen Wages of Bombay Cotton Mill Operatives in 1918 *including a War Bonus* in Rupees per mensem:—

Drawer (card room)	... 23 6	Rover	... 24 1
Reeler	... 17 4	Doffer	... 12 10
Warper	... 40 8	Weaver	... 46 15

In Madras the wages are much lower than in Bombay, and I have, if the Committee wants it, a complete Schedule of wages paid in the well-managed Buckingham and Carnatic Mills.

The wages clearly show how necessary it is to give the factory labourer the power of the vote, so that his battles may be fought in the Legislative Chambers by his elected representative. It is difficult to say how many factory labourers could thus be enfranchised; but the authorities can produce statements of how many earn Rs. 10, Rs. 15, Rs. 20, and so on in different provinces, and that would be a guide to the Committee in considering the suggestion that I am making.

II

My alternative suggestion brings into play both election and nomination methods. Every factory employing

more than 50 but less than 1,000 labourers should be the unit; all adult workers in such factories should be given the vote to elect one representative. All labourers working in factories employing more than 1,000 persons should have the right to elect one more representative for every thousand. Thus a panel will be obtained of several elected representatives; and one or two for each province can be nominated to the Provincial Councils from this panel.

Instead of making every factory employing 50 persons the unit, the unit may be every Trade Union with a membership of at least half the number of the total employed in the factories in that city. Let me illustrate: There are some 175 textile mills in Bombay employing about 190,000 men. A Trade Union of Textile Workers with a membership of 95,000 should be given the right to elect a representative. Once again a Panel is obtained and nominations may be made from the Panel. The recognition of Trade Unions in this way will accelerate the formation and progress of Trade Unionism and will greatly assist India's political growth.

TRADE UNIONS AND CASTE SYSTEM

Working in Madras among the so-called lower castes of Hindus and the poor people generally, I have had special opportunities of gathering their views on the non-Brahmana question. As far as the Labour Unions are concerned, I may safely assert that Hindus of all castes and members of other communities, Muslims, Indian Christians, etc., can and do work harmoniously together for their common welfare, without the least difficulty. There are many members of the various

Unions who are Brahmanas and I have not heard any complaints against them. In fact, the Brahmana-non-Brahmana question has never arisen. A few months ago I invited some 200 members of the Textile Union to a dinner at Adyar, where I live. I invited Brahmanas, non-Brahmanas of all castes, Muslims, Indian Christians and Panchamas. At the dinner, next to me sat a Panchama and by his side was a Brahmana; on the other side of me sat a Brahmana, and next to him was an Indian Christian. All were served the same vegetarian food, they all were treated alike, and the function was a great success. On numerous occasions all castes and communities have joined hands in an active manner. Further, I know for a fact that non-Brahmana labourers regard as ridiculous the movement started by some interested people, and they will not allow caste questions to affect their labour work; and that is also true of politics. I am a member of the Madras Presidency Association, which is an organisation of non-Brahmanas. I feel that these non-Brahmana communities must be organised for national work and by means of this Association we want to help the non-Brahmanas, who include rich landlords and merchants and artisans as also the bulk of the population, to take their part in the political and general advancement of India. Unlike the movement inaugurated by Dr. Nair, this Association is not *anti*-Brahmana, but wants to co-operate with Brahmanas to bring about thedesired result. Anyway, among the 20,000 poor people of Madras City with whom I come in contact through one or other of the Labour Unions, the anti-Brahmana movement finds no favour and most of them are non-Brahmanas.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I earnestly appeal to the Joint Committee to enable the Indian Labourer to obtain some political power, to set his feet on the road of political advancement, and thereby of his own uplift. The ghastly conditions under which he exists are not easily describable ; he has suffered in the past, and his welfare should not in the future be made to depend on those who are not responsible to him. The success of these reforms to a great extent depends on the atmosphere in which they will be worked in India. On account of various reasons I anticipate trouble in the Labour camp. If something is done now which will satisfy the labourer and convince him that his representatives are looking after his interests and fighting his battles, he will allow his energy and impatience to flow into good constructive work ; if nothing is done, then despair will seize him and impatience will lead him to ugly expressions which one wants to avoid in India.

Cross-Examination of Mr. B. P. Wadia

Lord Selborne :—Would you like to add anything to it, before the members of the Committee ask you questions upon it ?

Mr. Wadia :—Well, my Lord, first one word, namely of thanks on behalf of the labourers for calling me here, which will give them a great hope and confidence in your Lordship's Committee. I do not think I need read the Memorandum, because it has been put in, but with your permission I will make a very short statement, which will take me a few minutes only. There are in India some 17,515,000 workmen employed in industries, of whom some 950,000 are in large establish-

ments. There is an Indian Factories Act, which was originally passed in 1881, and was last amended in 1911. The law permits a twelve hours day; women are worked for eleven hours; children between the ages of nine and fourteen are worked for six hours. In the matter of wages the law is dumb; in the matter of sanitation it speaks in halting terms, and the inspection is superficial. Thus the record of the Administration in the past is not a satisfactory one from the view point of the labourer. Therefore I respectfully suggest that in the list of Provincial subjects both Nos. 24 and 25 and not only No. 24 should be transferred. I wish to draw the attention of the member for your Committee to page 26 of the Functions Committees Report. There we find No. 24: Development of Industries, including industrial Research and Technicial Education is a transferred subject, but industrial matters included under the following heads: Factories, Settlement of Labour Disputes, Electricity, Boilers, Gas, Smoke Nuisances, and welfare of Labour are all kept reserved in all the Provinces.

If both these items, 24 and 25, are transferred, then the Committee must contrive to get Indian labour to influence Provincial Legislatures in the future. As the Bill is framed at present and as the Southborough Report on Franchise stands, the Indian labourer is not at all enabled to better his lot through proper representatives; he will have to rely as in the past on the good-will of others, be they foreigners or be they his own countryman. I submit that the labourer's interests must be safeguarded and that the process of safeguarding them must be put into his own hands and into no one else's.

This raises the question of the fitness of the Indian

labourer. I beg to submit that the masses in India—and among them are the factory labourers—have a culture of their own. Their power of understanding political and economical issues and suggesting proper remedies in a practical manner is well-known to those who have worked for and with them. Their political instincts are clear and strong. The factor to be borne in mind is that the Indian labourers loathe the idea of slavery in any form or shape, and they want to have schools for their children, houses for themselves, better wages and shorter hours—all as a matter of right and justice. The efforts on the part of the employer or the Government to patronise them are disliked and resented. The Indian labourer feels that he is not only a "hand" but also that he has a head and a heart, and he aspires to come into his own.

Now under the proposed scheme a factory manager, a shop-owner, a planter can not only vote but get elected to the Council Chamber from his Chamber of Commerce, his trades association, or his planter's association. In Madras 13 seats are unalloyed capitalist seats. Take Bombay: The Millowners Association returns a member, but their employees have no representation. Under the system of Franchise recommended by the Southborough Committee the labourers will not be able to influence the election.

The Joint Committee should enable the Indian labourer to send his own representatives to the Provincial Legislatures. To include him or his brother on the land or in the mine in a general electorate would be the best plan. A suggestion was made by a society in Madras on this basis, and the number worked out at

something like 4,000,000 to be enfranchised in the one Presidency alone. Observing the way in which the reforms are shaping themselves and advocating the enfranchisement of the factory labourers especially, I make two suggestions which I have given in my Memorandum. I do not think I could put them more shortly than I have put them in my Memorandum.

There is only one more point I would like to put before the Committee, and that is on the question of the much discussed non-Brahmana problem. Having worked among those 20,000 labourers in Madras, who are mostly non-Brahmana, I beg to bring to the notice of the Committee, that there is no feeling against the Brahmanas amongst the poor people in Madras. I do not think, my Lord, I have anything more to say.

MR. SPOOR

You are over here I believe, as delegate to the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress?...... I am.

And you have been received and recognised by those two bodies?......I think so. I have not yet had an official answer from the Trades Union Parliamentary Committee, but I hope to have it in a day or two.

In the first part of the Memorandum, the statement rather, you have submitted to-day, you refer to the Union you have formed in Madras. How many members have you got in that Union? ....Altogether in those five Unions about 20,000 people.

Twenty thousand people confined to Madras. How long is it since you began to form that Union?...About sixteen or seventeen months now.

Have you reason to believe that in the days that

lie ahead you will be able to build up a trade union movement among factory workers in India?......I think so. I can speak there with a certain amount of confidence, because, as I say in my Memorandum, I have had invitations from various centres like Calcutta, Bombay, Cawnpore, Lucknow, and so on where factories in good shape and on a large scale exist and where the labourers are anxious to be organised. Work even now is going ahead.

Of course we understand that about 90 per cent of the workers in India are agricultural workers; do you think it will ever be possible to associate them together in any kind of trade union? ....I think so, and I think at a very early date—in fact I had, just before I started, a few requests, one especially from the district of Cuddalore in the Madras Pres. where agricultural labourers are anxious to unite themselves into a trade union.

Will this movement go pretty much along western lines?......I should think so.

I ask that question because we are constantly reminded that any comparison between industrial conditions in India and industrial conditions, say, in this country or in other parts of Europe is quite impossible. I know it has been suggested now more than once, that really improvidence is responsible for the evil conditions which exist in certain parts of India rather than any individual or collection of individuals?......I do not think so, I think the masses in India have of late taken very great interest in their own welfare and also in the big general problems that concerned Indian people, and one of the signs of the times is the desire on

their part to unite themselves; and I think the movement will, on the whole, go along the lines of trade unions here.

You state that the law in India does nothing at all with regard to the regulation of wages?......That is so.

You have however factory inspection?......Yes; but as I say, it is more or less superficial.

You give in your first Memorandum that was issued some time ago a comparison here between the wages? ......That is not the Memorandum I have given to this Committee but to the Trade Union Congress.

That is so—I beg your pardon. In that Memorandum you give a comparison between the wages paid, which run down to twelve shillings a month in the jute mills and the dividend paid to the shareholders in various companies, with, I imagine, Indian as well as European shareholders?......Yes.

Does that rather striking constrast (because I see that some of the dividends run up to 120 per cent) influence feeling to any great extent amongst the workers themselves?......It does; more and more through the help of the vernacular newspapers these things come to be known among the labourers and the workmen in factories and in mines, causing discontent that while they are labouring the profits go to the employers of labour and the labourers do not get their adequate share.

We have heard about the change in India during recent years, I mean the awakening of a political consciousness in India. Do you think those economic conditions have had anything to do with that?...I think the economic conditions have mostly to do with that. I believe that the patience of the Indian masses, both

agricultural and factory-going people, has practically come to a saturation point, and they cannot go on any more without some fundamental change in their conditions.

The point is, assuming that that is correct, do you believe that the giving of a vote to an increasing number of industrial workers, increasing as time goes on, will enable the worker to improve his own condition?...... Certainly: Because he will be able to send his own representative into the Provincial Councils, and will practically compel hisr epresentatives to bring in measures which will better his condition. If I may illustrate it, take this Factory Act which is in existence, and was last amended in 1911; as I have pointed out during the 40 years this Act has been in existence, since it was first passed in 1881, it has only been amended twice, once in 1890 or thereabouts, and in 1908 after the Commission went its round which came into force in 1911. Now if the labourer going into factories had the vote and if he had his representatives in the Provincial Legislatures, that thing would not have happened. The Act would have been amended much more quickly, and certainly in the year 1918—19 we would not have had the spectacle of a twelve hour day in the big Indian factories.

You believe that as a matter of common justice the Indian worker really requires the vote in order to protect himself?......I think so, Yes.

You offer two or three alternative suggestions here as to how the electorate might be increased, and I would, like to ask you which of the alternatives you think yourself would be most suitable?......Of course I, myself, would prefer that the franchise should be widened alto-

gether for all the poor people and the most unfortunate agricultural labourer and the mine worker; but as I pointed out, and it has been very carefully worked out by the Neo-Fabian Society of Madras, in the Madras Presidency alone, on that supposition of a wide franchise, the figure would come to 4,000,000. That compares, from the point of view of the Southborough Report, very unfavourably, because they give only a few thousands there. So that, having to keep that in mind, and the Bill as it is framed and as it stands at present, I myself, as I say in my Memorandum, reluctantly abandoned the 4,000,000. Then I give, from the point of view of the factory labourer two schemes, one which enables him to elect a representative of his own on a wage earning qualification, and I suggest a certain figure of 15 rupees for the Madras Presidency. That figure I have given tentatively, because on account of various reasons, I think it will presently be raised, but at any rate it is my opinion that we must fix a particular wage-earning capacity, different perhaps in different cities, because the wages are higher in Calcutta and Bombay.

Just interrupting you a moment. It is correct that the Bombay Government did ascertain the figures of wage earners above a certain amount with a view to recommending their being given the franchise?...I have heard that: how far it is true I am not in a position authoritatively to say, but I have heard it.

What you are really seeking is not so much the addition of these people to the electorate as a class, you are not asking for class representation so much as you are wishful to extend the franchise generally?...Yes: but as I say, if that is not possible, and I can quite see

that at this stage it may not be possible, then on behalf of my factory-going labourer I claim that his case ought to be specially considered, and for this reason; that in the general franchise which has been framed by Lord Southborough's Committee, the whole basis has been naturally the present agricultural labourer, because 90 per cent of our population is agricultural. Every time you consider the proposition of the franchise you will have to take that into consideration, so that while their case has been considered I submit that the case of the labourer, working in the big factories in big towns, has not been considered. There is one thing to be said for the factory-going labourer in the towns.

CHAIRMAN

Did you give evidence before the Franchise Committee?...No. I was not called.

Did you ask to be called?...No, I did not.

Was not that rather a mistake?...It did not occur to me to speak specially on behalf of the Indian labourer as a separate class.

MR. SPOOR

I just want to ask one more question: Assuming that the Committee cannot see its way to grant an extension of the franchise at once, as you suggest, do you think that the promise of an extension of the franchise, say, when the second election came along—if it was incorporated in the Act when the next election came it would be on a proper Franchise? Do you think that would in any way meet the desires of the organizations you represent and of the public opinion that you have been voicing here?...If it is definitely promised and incorporated in the statute so that we are sure that at

the next election we—that is the labourers working in factories—would have their representatives on the Provincial Councils, I think to a certain extent, not altogether, it would meet the desires and wishes of the labourers I have the honour to represent.

But what you really want is to have the franchise widened immediately, if at all possible?...That is of course what would be the first and best thing I would ask for. But when you are speaking of promises I would not be satisfied with a promise which is not absolutely incorporated in the Statute, as it comes to be framed, so that at the next step we are sure of getting in as a matter of course.

SIR J. D. REES

May I ask you one or two questions? But not to approach you like a wolf in sheep's clothing, I must say that I am a director of railways, mines and tea and coffee estates in India. You have only 20,000 in your unions in Madras?...In the city of Madras, Yes.

It is the day of small things in that respect? Yes.

You had what you yourself described as a well-managed strike at the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills.? No, there was no strike but there were two lock-outs in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills. The strikes I referred to were of the tramwaymen.

You referred to various causes which are likely to give trouble in labour—forces let loose by the war and the Russian Revolution which have widened and coloured the political outlook. So far as your association is concerned did you point out the appalling results of the Russian Revolution?...Yes: All the vernacular newspapers and the English newspapers naturally give the

reports of whatever is appearing in your English papers and all the ghastly reports which have appeared about the Russian Revolution have been copied in the Indian papers.

You yourself would not conceal those results from your people?...No, certainly not.

You speak of the excessive hours and the premature exhaustion and so-forth. Does that come to you really as the result of complaints or from the observation of yourself and your friends?...As complaints reached me from labourers working in a few of the mills, I made investigations and researches at first hand, and then, as the result of them we decided to form a labour Union, and we have been working at it for the last sixteen months.

Have you in mind always the danger that too much or too sudden action of the character you indicate might check the influx of British capital which I think you will agree is very desirable in India?...I do not know that I would fully agree with that statement; it would take us altogether into a new line of thought.

I do not wish to raise any economic question at all; if you do not think the influx of British capital into India beneficial, I have no more to ask you about that; I think your attitude is, that it is not beneficial, is it not?

CHAIRMAN

Mr. Wadia did not say that; he said that it was a large question, and that he could not answer in one sentance?...I would have to cover a fair plot of ground.

SIR J. D. REES

Could you not say whether you thought it was beneficial or not? His Lordship does not mean to check

you ?...From one point of view it is beneficial, but from various other points of view, also, it is not beneficial.

On the whole which weighs most?...Unless a certain amount of reform is introduced in the method of bringing in of British capital, I would rather not have British capital as matters stand at present.

You demur to the reservation of the settlement of labour disputes do you not ?...Yes.

I am not quite clear about that. Do you feel that if different Local Governments can deal with a question like that, it would be possible, so far as Government intervention occurred, if it must occur, to establish anything like uniformity of treatment ?...The question first to settle is this : Do you want, and that is what I am really driving at in my question, do you desire that the Government in future should be made responsible for the settlement of disputes between private capitalists and private labour? You have to recognize the new power that is now springing up of the united action of trade unions ; for instance, during the two strikes that we have had with the tramway men in Madras, and the two locks-out that we have had in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras, the Government did not think fit to interfere; it left the conditions as they stood, and all the interference that we got—and I think very wisely got—was from the Police Commissioner, who saw that things did not go into excess; but they do not ever settle disputes.

But you think they did well ?...I think they did well.

So do I.—Now as to the future, if the settlement of labour disputes is a reserved subject in all the provinces, and if the trade unions should claim the right to speak,

as I believe they will, then I do not see how we can reconcile these two points....I think the trade unions will claim a certain right and privilege to speak on behalf of their labourers in the settlement of any disputes that arise.

Do you contemplate the development in India, whether for good or bad, which has been so marked in Europe, of the general interference of the Government in the settlement of labour disputes?...I hope that we may not come to such a point, and to safeguard that, as I pointed out in my memorandum, we are already, at this very early stage, building up what in Madras we have called a Labour Board, where we try to get the representatives of the employers and the representatives of the trade unions to come together and work independently of the Government. As I suggest the Government might limit their action to the creation of such Labour Boards.

You say that in the Bill before us you find no attempt to introduce any measure of reform which will give the labourer any voice in safeguarding his own interests. You mean by that that the Franchise proposals are not such as to give him a representation?...Yes.

You know that special representation is given to Indian commerce through the agency of the Indian Chamber of Commerce?...Yes, but I may point out that I am not here putting forward a claim on behalf of the Indian merchant. The Indian landlord is a capitalist, and the Indian merchant is a capitalist also.

You say is there any way to bring the Indian labourer into power, you mean power to deal with his own interests?...Yes.

You say that their politicial instincts are clear and

strong. You really feel that?...Yes, from my personal experience at these various Labour Unions, I think I can safely say that their political instincts are strong and their judgment sound and full of common sense.

You did not make this recommendation as to the occupants of houses and premises (this is the one you chiefly rely upon) of the annual rental value of 48 rupees in towns and 24 rupees outside, and so on anywhere?... Yes, it was published in a little transaction of the Neo-Fabian Society of Madras, which I hold in my hand. Those are my data.

And you think that the Madras Government adopted a very obstinate and retrogressive attitude towards you?......That is my opinion.

What is the authority for the figure—it may be perfectly right but it astonishes me—that the total number of workers in large industrial establishments is $17\frac{1}{2}$ millions?...It is in the Statistical Abstract of British India, which the India Office publishes.

I can look that up for myself. You propose that all labourers working in factories and earning a particular wage should be given the vote, and then you make certain proposals: Again, were they laid before the Madras Government when they were making their recommendations?—No.

Then you finish your very interesting memorandum, if I may venture to so describe it, by saying that in Madras, Muslims, Indian Christians, and Panchamas work harmoniously together for their own welfare, and no Brahmana or non-Brahmana question has ever arisen, which is a ridiculous movement started by some interested people, but that workers will not

allow caste questions to affect their labour work, which is also true of politics....Yes : and I have given as an instance one of the best cases of the inter-dining about which so much has been talked. You see that at a dinner of 200 people, including Brahmanas, and Panchamas, the left and right extremes, they come together, and as far as our Labour Union's works are concerned, they have found absolutely no difficulty.

I thank you very much, and I want to say how deeply I agree with you in what you have just said.

LORD SINHA

Mr. Wadia, are your present proposals directed to enfranchise labour as such ?...Factory going labour as such.

That is in towns I suppose?...In towns mostly.

Practically the biggest towns like Calcutta, Bombay Madras and Cawnpore?...Yes, and also there may be a certain number of smaller towns in Madras and the Bombay Presidency, where there are factories and mills.

Would not they come in under the Franchise laid down for big municipalities and towns by payment of municipal taxes?...I do not think under the Franchise scheme of Lord Southborough's Committee for instance the labourers of Madras would come in.

The payment is something very small is it not?... Yes, but when you come to think of it, when a weaver in Madras earns between 15 and 20 rupees a month, it is not likely that you will get people—as there are others earning still less in the carding and spinning departments,—to be able to pay municipal taxes to that extent. I speak there tentatively because I have not made enquiries into it.

You have not considered as to whether the Franchise recommended by the Southborough Report would enfranchise the labour population in those big industrial centres, or to what extent?...No; I have not gone in a direct fashion into the matter. Under the recommendations that have been made, certain municipal rates and taxes have to be paid. Now I do not think that the ordinary labourer in Madras would be in a position from the earning capacity that he possesses to pay those taxes.

Would they come in under the rural franchise, because I understand most of these people labour only in the factories for a portion of the year and go back to the land during the rest of the year?...Well, that is so to a very limited extent, and the Indian factory labour is getting less than less in that direction. It is not that for a few months they work in the factories and they go away, but rather that for a few years they work in the factories and then go away.

At any rate your position is that the Franchise proposals of the Southborough Committee do not enfranchise the labourers in those industries?...That is so.

You would not put it higher than that?...I would not put it more emphatically than that because I have no first hand information on the subject.

CHAIRMAN

You would not say that you had sufficiently examined the facts and figures with regard to Madras to see how far they would have affected your view of the Franchise proposals?...No; I read the Franchise Report after leaving India, and I have written to Madras, and in the course of a few weeks we may get

some information, and if it comes I presume that I may send it to your Lordship?

Chairman...Certainly.

LORD ISLINGTON

Have you arrived at any idea of the number of agricultural labourers who will get the vote under the Southborough proposals?...I should think that the whole number that is given in the Southborough Committee's Report, would bring a portion of the agriculturists, whether they be landlords or peasant proprietors.

I am asking about labourers. Out of 500,000 odd electors to be established in Madras under the Southborough proposals, how many of those should you say would be agricultural labourers?...The actual figure of the electors is 542,000.

How many of those would be agricultural labourers? ...I cannot say. I am not prepared to give the figure.

Have you any idea whether it would be an appreciable figure at all?...Of those 542,000?

Yes, of the 542,000 proposed to have votes, would you say that the agricultural labourer as such would have any appreciable representation?...He would have some representation, but I would not say appreciable representation. There however I speak very tentatively, because I have not looked into the figures carefully, as I just said.

You have looked into the question of the factories? ...Yes.

And as far as you can see under those proposals there would be no representation?...As I say, when you take into consideration that 15 rupees is the wage earning capacity of the weaver in textile factories which is

higher in Bombay and Calcutta then you will see, as I have just said in reply to Lord Sinha's question, he is not in a position to pay that municipal rate or tax, and thus he will not be able to come into the number.

How many do you say that you estimate would get votes if the basis were fifteen rupees a month?—Have you worked it out? You say that 4,000,000 would be too many in proportion to the number proposed?...Yes

Then you proceed on the other suggestions?...Yes.

One of those suggestions, as I understand it, is alternative to the original proposal, but for Madras would you suggest that every labourer earning fifteen rupees a month in a factory should get the vote?...In the City of Madras.

How many do your think would get the vote on that qualification? ...Between 20,000 and 25,000 people in the City of Madras would get extra votes who are labourers.

You are anxious to see the Services which deal with these factory and mine administrations transferred subjects ?...Yes.

Would you like to see them transferred subjects if the present electorate was established without any representation ?...Yes, certainly, because as I put forward the plea in my Memorandum, the Indian Ministers would be in a better position to understand and therefore to deal with the troubles which are existing now, than the official executive. Already in the past, the administration has had the chance of improving the factory legislation and of dealing with this problem, and my contention is that they have not done sufficient for the factory labourer.

Have many efforts been made in the Provincial Councils on the part of Indian members to get ameliorative legislation from the Government ?...Not many as far as Madras is concerned : and that again is because there is no representative of the labourers in the Provincial Legislatures as at present constituted.

So that you would admit that these subjects, becoming transferred subjects, would be incomplete in what you would like to see them realise, unless coupled with them was a worker's electorate ?...That would be the first factor I would put forward. But even supposing that nothing is done to enfranchise the factory labourer, if No. 25 of the subjects is transferred instead of being kept reserved, the Indian minister will have to deal with the subject and he will be able to deal with it better than the official executive. That is my view, especially as No. 24, which is the development of industries, including industrial research and technical education is to be transferred. That is going to be a transferred subject and the legislation regarding the welfare of labour and regarding other things connected with the factory is kept a reserved subject, and my contention is that both should be transferred.

MR. ACLAND

I forget for the moment the numbers that you told us belonged to your Unions, ?...Roughly, 20.000, of the five Unions.

Can you tell us what proportion of those are literate? ...Literate in the sense of reading and writing ?

Yes ?...I think on the whole, perhaps, you will find a few hundreds who can read or write.

Is that proportion increasing or tending to incrase ?

...It would be, to give my own personal experience, too short a time to judge; but I think from the general movement that is taking place in India it is on the increase. I have come into contact with them for the last sixteen or eighteen months, and it is too soon for me to say whether it is appreciably increasing.

Do you know of any movement that is taking place in Madras to found schools or anything of that kind, where they would learn to read and write?...Since the establishment of the Labour Unions we have done certain constructive work, like opening dispensaries, selling rice and others stores, and a night-school for the labourers and there are other night schools in the vicinity of the Mills now.

There is just one thing I would like to understand about the ordinary life of men of this class. You said that generally they spent some years of their lives in working in a factory in the town and other years in the agricultural districts. I am much impressed with the low rate of wages you quote to us. Is the general system that they come in and do the work in the factories for a certain number of years until they have earned and accumulated a certain amount of money which they carried back to their country districts, or is it, as one would perhaps be more led to think from your evidence, the fact that they appreciate life in the town so much that they come in from the country with the money they have made in the country, until they have spent it all in supplementing their wages in the town?...I think I can explain that in this way: Generally the factory labourer is some kind of an agriculturist in a village. He is there living under very bad conditions, with an increasing debt and so

forth, and then, out of sheer impatience, he makes the change in the hope of making some money and goes to a factory. He works there for a few years under the conditions, and then I believe, and I think it can be proven from records, on account of the severe conditions under which he has to work, he retires after a few years broken down in health.

Without being able to save much money ?...Yes: and that produces the very curious phenomenon which was observed by two Commissions appointed by the Government, that they did not find labourers in the factories above the age of forty as a rule. That is due to the premature exhaustion which steps in on account of the factory conditions.

MR. BENNET

Mr. Wadia, do you know the industrial conditions of Bombay as well as those of Madras ?...Not so well of Bombay as of Madras.

You are member of a well-known Bombay family, are you not ?...Yes.

I thought so. Will you give me your view of the manner in which the Mill owners of Bombay as a class—they own something like eighty Mills do they not?—have performed their duties towards those whom they employ ?...Some of them have done very well by their labourers. It is a very interesting question because it relates to the new conditions that are arising in India. The labourer now is not satisfied to take better conditions as a matter of favour which the Indian capitalist in Bombay is willing to provide for him. I know of instances of Mills owned by Indian capitalists who make admirable arrangements for their labourers in several mills. I cannot

speak the same of all mills—but when you take into consideration the wages which are actually earned by the Bombay labourer and the dividends which are declared by some mills, you will see where the grievance of the labourer lies. He wants something as a matter of right and not as a matter of patronage.

Would you call that patronage which the great firm of Tata have exhibited in their mills in Central India where, as you know, they have established welfare schemes; they have taken welfare experts from this country to assist them in establishing welfare mills?... Yes.

You speak in rather an ungracious way of services of that kind rendered by employers. However I do not think it is very relevant to the question. You represent, I think, five establishments in Madras. Have the people employed there shewn any capacity for organising for what we call nowadays self-government?...Yes. In those Unions we have various organising committees for various kinds of work and managing committees to carry on the work of the Unions, which are entirely composed of the labourers themselves. They elect their own representatives, they plan out their own work, and they carry through the work and really what I do for them there is to plead their cause and their grievances in public, and generally to keep the movement going from outside, but the entire work of organisation of those Unions is carried out by the men themselves, and visitors have been surprised at the intelligence and capacity which those labourers have displayed.

I do not want to put it in an invidious way, as you will understand, but could they possibly have done with-

out you? Could they have organised themselves and placed themselves before the public without you?...I doubt it.

In your Memorandum you say that you have had invitations from Calcutta, Bombay and various other places to organise their unions. Does not that seem to suggest that there is at all events an imperfect capacity for organisation among the labourers themselves?...The labourers themselves, yes; but at the same time you must bear in mind this, that any particular set of labourers who come forward to organise trade unions at the present moment in India would be marked men and would naturally suffer in their factories and in all organisations to which they belonged.

You think there is organising capacity among the people?...I am sure of it.

Do you infer from that that they would be capable of organising themselves for political purposes?—I should think so, yes.

We were asked the other day why it was that there was no representation of labour. I think it was Bombay factory labour, but labour at all events, upon Lord Southborough's Committee. Would it have been possible to have found a single man in one of the mills who, if he had been selected for that Committee, could have spoken English or any language which was common to the whole of his colleagues?...If the language bar could be removed I am sure that you could find men in Bombay. I have now in mind a man in Madras who could very well advise such a committee as the Southborough Committee, if his own language

Tamil, or Hindustani was spoken. He would not be able perhaps to talk of subjects which were outside his province, and would not be able to advise, say, on agriculture or other matters.

Let us carry that to the Legislative Council. You speak of the language bar; do you think you could have found a mill hand in Bombay who could have taken his place in the Legislative Council, where of course English is the official language? Do you think you could have found a man?...No.

You would have had to go outside the mills to get a labourer's representative....Yes, at the present moment that would happen. Supposing you give the vote to the factory labourers in Bombay, Calcutta or Madras at the present moment, I think an outsider would have to represent them.

As to their power to form opinions and to guide the representative, is it not the case that the factory hands in India are in a peculiar sense a gregarious people and follow their leaders, very often not knowing what they are doing and what they are following?...I should not think so. From my own experience and I have had to deal as I have said with two lock-outs and two strikes in a short period of 16 months, I can tell you that it took us many hours of discussion and debate to come to a settlement. They are not in a position to follow very meekly, and to say yea to everything their leaders say. They are rather given to a thorough discussion and debate of the points which are raised, and to come to an agreement after certain discussion.

MAJOR ORMSBY-GORE

I take it that you suggest that if this Committee

cannot see its way to widen the Franchise so as to include factory hands, we should try to make one or two special constituencies in the towns where there are mills and to give a special franchise to the factory worker. That is your alternative. Would you suggest that that Franchise should form, as it were, another communal electorate, or do you wish them thrown in with the rest of the voters to vote as part of the general constituency ?...I would not mind at all their being thrown into the general electorate, provided that they had the vote, because they would be able to influence the election.

Do you think it would be just as valuable to them to have votes for one of the ordinary politicians as it would be for them to have a definite representative of their own ?...Yes : because I am sure that the labourers will extract good terms from the ordinary politician before they send him into the Provincial Councils.

Now for this experiment you suggest—that it should be applied in about five great towns?...Well, I have suggested a wage-earning capacity for large industrial establishments, and I think it would be more than five towns.

About how many people would be enfranchised, do you think, in Calcutta ?...As I said, I have no data for that yet.

CHAIRMAN

If you get the further information you have referred to later, you will kindly send it in ?... I will do so my Lord.

To the Rt. Hon. the Earl ot Selborne,

President, Joint Select Committee on Draft Rules under the Government of India Act, 1919.

MY LORD,

I had the honour of appearing as a witness before the Joint Committee presided over by you on August 12, 1919. My evidence is recorded in the volume of Minutes of Evidence, pp. 201-208.

Representing the Madras Labour Union, I drew the attention of the Committee to the necessity of enfranchising the wage-earning factory-going workers. In a statement submitted to that Committee two schemes were put forward to achieve that end.

The Report of the Joint Select Committee recommended the enfranchisement of wage-earners in cities. The Report says: "They also think that an attempt should be made to secure better representation of the urban wage-earning classes." (Page 7).

The Government of India in their Draft Rules have endeavoured to respond to this recommendation, and the wage-earners of Bombay and Calcutta have been enfranchised to a very meagre extent. This cannot be regarded as satisfactory, and yet a beginning has been made, for which, as a friend of Indian Labour, let me record my grateful thanks to your Lordship's Committee and the Government of India.

It is, however, a matter of great disappointment that the Government of India have not extended even this very limited franchise to wage-earners in other cities like Cawnpore, Ahmedabad, and Madras. Why this anomalous distinction is made between Bombay and Calcutta and other industrial centres is not clear. The recom-

mendation referred to above inspired hope in the minds of the working classes, and that has been unfortunately destroyed by the Draft Rules.

Some arguments were put forward by me last year in support of the enfranchisement of the wage-earner. Those arguments remain true to-day, and if the principle is accepted as right in the cases of Bombay and Calcutta, it is also right in the case of the Southern capital, Madras, and such important centres as Ahmedabad and Cawnpore. In Madras labour is better organised than elsewhere in India. The first Labour Union was founded in Madras in April, 1918. That Union was of the textile workers of Madras, consisting of thousands of men and has showed its efficacy in several ways: it was the pioneer institution which decided that its representative should bring to the notice of the British public the very unsatisfactory conditions of Labour in India. It was principally on behalf of that Union that I came before your Lordship's Committee last year. As President of the Madras Labour Union, I beg to draw particular attention to the disadvantage to which that Union of textile workers is put, and with all the force that I can command re-request that the Joint Select Committee over which your Lordship is now presiding should remove the disability imposed on the wage-earners of Madras textile industry by the Draft Rules. However small, a beginning has been made in Bombay and Calcutta, and it is not only desirable but necessary in the interests of fair-play that a similar beginning be made in the capital of the large Southern Presidency.

In Madras, commerce and industry return no less than five members to the Provincial Legislative Council.

Under the Act, capitalists will form a powerful element in the Madras Council, and even the nominal device to be utilised in the case of Bombay and Calcutta is not proposed for Madras. This is very undesirable. for in it one cannot but see the seed of future trouble in Madras.

In my evidence last year I referred to the growing restlessness of Indian labour. May I draw your Lordship's attention and that of your Committee to the fact that during the last few months there have been a number of strikes, some of then very serious, in Sholapur, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Madras, Jamshedpur, Lahore, etc. Also may I point out that the textile workers of Madras, with their Union, have not gone on strike ? Perhaps for the reason that we passed through a satisfactory struggle in 1918. Further, that when those men of the Madras Union were struggling there was no manifestation of disorderly conduct. If that be so, are the Madras textile workers to be penalised for their enterprise in organising themselves ? Or is it reasonable to suppose that their good conduct will continue if they feel that they have been discriminated against in the matter of the franchise ? Hence may I suggest that it is very essential that a beginning should be made in Madras similar to that in the two other Presidencies ? I sinerely trust that this appeal on behalf of the textile workers of Madras will find favour with your Lordship's Commitee.

I have the honour to be, My Lord,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

B. P. WADIA,

President, Madras Labour Union.